

Selected Works of Mikhail Bakunin



The Paris Commune and the Idea of the State.

Ethics: Morality of the State.

Stateless Socialism: Anarchism.

The Capitalist System.

Equal Opportunity in Education.

Marxism Freedom and the State.

The Paris Commune and the Idea of the State by Mikhail Bakunin 1814-1876

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This work, like all my published work, of which there has not been a great deal, is an outgrowth of events. It is the natural continuation of my Letters to a Frenchman (September 1870), wherein I had the easy but painful distinction of foreseeing and foretelling the dire calamities which now beset France and the whole civilized world, the only cure for which is the Social Revolution.

My purpose now is to prove the need for such a revolution. I shall review the historical development of society and what is now taking place in Europe, right before our eyes. Thus all those who sincerely thirst for truth can accept it and proclaim openly and unequivocally the philosophical principles and practical aims which are at the very core of what we call the Social Revolution.

I know my self-imposed task is not a simple one. I might be called presumptuous had I any personal motives in undertaking it. Let me assure my reader, I have none. I am not a scholar or a philosopher, not even a professional writer. I have not done much writing in my life and have never written except, so to speak, in self-defense, and only when a passionate conviction forced me to overcome my instinctive dislike for any public exhibition of myself.

Well, then, who am I, and what is it that prompts me to publish this work at this time? I am an impassioned seeker of the truth, and as bitter an enemy of the vicious fictions used by the established order - an order which has profited from all the religious, metaphysical, political, juridical, economic, and social infamies of all times - to brutalize and enslave the world. I am a fanatical lover of liberty. I consider it the only environment in which human intelligence, dignity, and happiness can thrive and develop. I do not mean that formal liberty which is dispensed, measured out, and regulated by the State; for this is a perennial lie and represents nothing but the privilege of a few, based upon the servitude of the remainder. Nor do I mean that individualist, egoist, base, and fraudulent liberty extolled by the school of Jean Jacques Rousseau and every other school of bourgeois liberalism, which considers the rights of all, represented by the State, as a limit for the rights of each; it always, necessarily, ends up by reducing the rights of individuals to zero. No, I mean the only liberty worthy of the name, the liberty which implies the full development of all the material, intellectual, and moral capacities latent in every one of us; the liberty which knows no other restrictions but those set by the laws of our own nature. Consequently there are, properly speaking, no restrictions, since these laws are not imposed upon us by any legislator from outside, alongside, or above ourselves. These laws are subjective, inherent in ourselves; they constitute the very basis of our being. Instead of seeking to curtail them, we should see in them the real condition and the effective cause of our liberty - that liberty of each man which does not find another man's freedom a boundary but a confirmation and vast extension of his own; liberty through solidarity, in equality. I mean liberty triumphant over brute force and, what has always been the real expression of such force, the principle of authority. I mean liberty which will shatter all the idols in heaven and on earth and will then build a new world of mankind in solidarity, upon the ruins of all the churches and all the states.

I am a convinced advocate of economic and social equality because I know that, without it, liberty, justice, human dignity, morality, and the well-being of individuals, as well as the prosperity of nations, will never amount to more than a pack of lies. But since I stand for liberty as the primary condition of mankind, I believe that equality must be established in the world by the spontaneous organization of labor and the collective ownership of property by freely organized producers' associations, and by the equally spontaneous federation of communes, to replace the domineering paternalistic State.

It is at this point that a fundamental division arises between the socialists and revolutionary collectivists on the one hand and the authoritarian communists who support the absolute power of the State on the other. Their ultimate aim is identical. Both equally desire to create a new social order based first on the organization of collective labor, inevitably imposed upon each and all by the natural force of events, under conditions equal for all, and second, upon the collective ownership of the tools of production.

The difference is only that the communists imagine they can attain their goal by the development and organization of the political power of the working classes, and chiefly of the proletariat of the cities, aided by bourgeois radicalism. The revolutionary socialists, on the other hand, believe they can succeed only through the development and organization of the nonpolitical or antipolitical social power of the working classes in city and country, including all men of goodwill from the upper classes who break with their past and wish openly to join them and accept their revolutionary program in full.

This divergence leads to a difference in tactics. The communists believe it necessary to organize the workers' forces in order to seize the political power of the State. The revolutionary socialists organize for the purpose of destroying - or, to put it more politely - liquidating the State. The communists advocate the principle and the practices of authority; the revolutionary socialists put all their faith in liberty. Both equally favor science, which is to eliminate superstition and take the place of religious faith. The former would like to impose science by force; the latter would try to propagate it so that human groups, once convinced, would organize and federalize spontaneously, freely, from the bottom up, of their own accord and true their own interests, never following a prearranged plan imposed upon "ignorant" masses by a few "superior" minds.

The revolutionary socialists hold that there is a great deal more practical good sense and wisdom in the instinctive aspirations and real needs of the masses than in the profound intelligence of all the doctors and guides of humanity who, after so many failures, still keep on trying to make men happy. The revolutionary socialists, further more, believe that mankind has for too long submitted to being governed; that the cause of its troubles does not lie in any particular form of government but in the fundamental principles and the very existence of government, whatever form it may take.

Finally, there is the well-known contradiction between communism as developed scientifically by the German school and accepted in part by the Americans and the English, and Proudhonism, greatly developed and taken to its ultimate conclusion by the proletariat of the Latin countries. Revolutionary socialism has just attempted its first striking and practical demonstration in the Paris Commune.

I am a supporter of the Paris Commune, which for all the bloodletting it suffered at the hands of monarchical and clerical reaction, has nonetheless grown more enduring and more powerful in the hearts and minds of Europe's proletariat. I am its supporter, above all, because it was a bold, clearly formulated negation of the State.

It is immensely significant that this rebellion against the State has taken place in France, which had been hitherto the land of political centralization par excellence, and that it was precisely Paris, the leader and the fountainhead of the great French civilization, which took the initiative in the Commune. Paris, casting aside her crown and enthusiastically proclaiming her own

defeat in order to give life and liberty to France, to Europe, to the entire world; Paris reaffirming her historic power of leadership, showing to all the enslaved peoples (and are there any masses that are not slaves?) the only road to emancipation and health; Paris inflicting a mortal blow upon the political traditions of bourgeois radicalism and giving a real basis to revolutionary socialism against the reactionaries of France and Europe! Paris shrouded in her own ruins, to give the solemn lie to triumphant reaction; saving, by her own disaster, the honor and the future of France, and proving to mankind that if life, intelligence, and moral strength have departed from the upper classes, they have been preserved in their power and promises in the proletariat! Paris inaugurating the new era of the definitive and complete emancipation of the masses and their real solidarity across state frontiers; Paris destroying nationalism and erecting the religion of humanity upon its ruins; Paris proclaiming herself humanitarian and atheist, and replacing divine fictions with the great realities of social life and faith in science, replacing the lies and inequities of the old morality with the principles of liberty, justice, equality, and fraternity, those eternal bases of all human morality! Paris heroic, rational and confident, confirming her strong faith in the destinies of mankind by her own glorious downfall, her death; passing down her faith, in all its power, to the generations to come! Paris, drenched in the blood of her noblest children - this is humanity itself, crucified by the united international reaction of Europe, under the direct inspiration of all the Christian churches and that high priest of iniquity, the Pope. But the coming international revolution, expressing the solidarity of the peoples, shall be the resurrection of Paris.

This is the true meaning, and these are the immense, beneficent results of two months which encompassed the life and death of the ever memorable Paris Commune.

The Paris Commune lasted too short a time, and its internal development was too hampered by the mortal struggle it had to engage in against the Versailles reaction to allow it at least to formulate, if not apply, its socialist program theoretically. We must realize, too, that the majority of the members of the Commune were not socialists, properly speaking. If they appeared to be, it was because they were drawn in this direction by the irresistible course of events, the nature of the situation, the necessities of their position, rather than through personal conviction. The socialists were a tiny minority - there were, at most, fourteen or fifteen of them; the rest were Jacobins. But, let us make it clear, there are Jacobins and Jacobins. There are Jacobin lawyers and doctrinaires, like Mr. Gambetta; their positivist...presumptuous, despotic, and legalistic republicanism had repudiated the old revolutionary faith, leaving nothing of Jacobinism but its cult of unity and authority, and delivered the people of France over to the Prussians, and later still to native-born reactionaries. And there are Jacobins who are frankly revolutionaries, the heroes, the last sincere representatives of the democratic faith of 1793; able to sacrifice both their well-armed unity and authority rather than submit their conscience to the insolence of the reaction. These magnanimous Jacobins led naturally by Delescluze, a great soul and a great character, desire the triumph of the Revolution above everything else; and since there is no revolution without the masses, and since the masses nowadays reveal an instinct for socialism and can only make an economic and social revolution, the Jacobins of good faith, letting themselves be impelled increasingly by the logic of the revolutionary movement, will end up becoming socialists in spite of themselves.

This precisely was the situation in which the Jacobins who participated in the Paris Commune found themselves. Delescluze, and many others with him, signed programs and proclamations whose general import and promise were of a positively socialist nature. However, in spite of their good faith and all their goodwill, they were merely socialists impelled by outward circumstances rather than by an inward conviction; they lacked the time and even the capacity to overcome and subdue many of their own bourgeois prejudices which were contrary to their newly acquired socialism. One can understand that, trapped in this internal struggle, they could never go beyond generalities or take any of those decisive measures that would end their solidarity and all their contacts with the bourgeois world forever.

This was a great misfortune for the Commune and these men. They were paralyzed, and they paralyzed the Commune. Yet we cannot blame them. Men are not transformed overnight; they do not change their natures or their habits at will. They proved their sincerity by letting themselves be killed for the Commune. Who would dare ask more of them?

They are no more to be blamed than the people of Paris, under whose influence they thought and acted. The people were socialists more by instinct than by reflection. All their aspirations are in the highest degree socialist but their ideas, or rather their traditional expressions, are not. The proletariat of the great cities of France, and even of Paris, still cling to many Jacobin prejudices, and to many dictatorial and governmental concepts. The cult of authority - the fatal result of religious education, that historic source of all evils, depravations, and servitude - has not yet been completely eradicated in them. This is so true that even the most intelligent children of the people, the most convinced socialists, have not freed themselves completely of these ideas. If you rummage around a bit in their minds, you will find the Jacobin, the advocate of government, cowering in a dark corner, humble but not quite dead.

And, too, the small group of convinced socialists who participated in the Commune were in a very difficult position. While they felt the lack of support from the great masses of the people of Paris, and while the organization of the International Association, itself imperfect, compromised hardly a few thousand persons, they had to keep up a daily struggle against the Jacobin majority. In the midst of the conflict, they had to feed and provide work for several thousand workers, organize and arm them, and keep a sharp lookout for the doings of the reactionaries. All this in an immense city like Paris, besieged, facing the threat of starvation, and a prey to all the shady intrigues of the reaction, which managed to establish itself in Versailles with the permission and by the grace of the Prussians. They had to set up a revolutionary government and army against the government and army of Versailles; in order to fight the monarchist and clerical reaction they were compelled to organize themselves in a Jacobin manner, forgetting or sacrificing the first conditions of revolutionary socialism.

In this confusing situation, it was natural that the Jacobins, the strongest section, constituting the majority of the Commune, who also possessed a highly developed political instinct, the tradition and practice of governmental organization, should have had the upper hand over the socialists. It is a matter of surprise that they did not press their advantage more than they did; that they did not give a fully Jacobin character to the Paris insurrection; that, on the contrary, they let themselves be carried along into a social revolution.

I know that many socialists, very logical in their theory, blame our Paris friends for not having acted sufficiently as socialists in their revolutionary practice. The yelping pack of the bourgeois press, on the other hand, accuse them of having followed their program too faithfully. Let us forget, for a moment, the ignoble denunciations of that press. I want to call the attention of the strictest theoreticians of proletarian emancipation to the fact that they are unjust to our Paris brothers, for between the most correct theories and their practical application lies an enormous distance which cannot be bridged in a few days. Whoever had the pleasure of knowing Varlin, for instance (to name just one man whose death is certain), knows that he and his friends were guided by profound, passionate, and well-considered socialist convictions. These were men whose ardent zeal, devotion, and

good faith had never been questioned by those who had known them. Yet, precisely because they were men of good faith, they were filled with self-distrust in the face of the immense task to which they had devoted their minds and their lives; they thought too little of themselves! And they were convinced that in the Social Revolution, diametrically opposite to a political revolution in this as in other ways, individual action was to be almost nil, while the spontaneous action of the masses had to be everything. All that individuals can do is formulate, clarify, and propagate ideas expressing the instinctive desires of the people, and contribute their constant efforts to the revolutionary organization of the natural powers of the masses. This and nothing more; all the rest can be accomplished only by the people themselves. Otherwise we would end up with a political dictatorship - the reconstitution of the State, with all its privileges, inequalities, and oppressions; by taking a devious but inevitable path we would come to reestablish the political, social, and economic slavery of the masses.

Varlin and all his friends, like all sincere socialists, and generally like all workers born and bred among the people, shared this perfectly legitimate feeling of caution toward the continuous activity of one and the same group of individuals and against the domination exerted by superior personalities. And since they were just and fair-minded men above all else, they turned this foresight, this mistrust, against themselves as much as against other persons.

Contrary to the belief of authoritarian communists - which I deem completely wrong - that a social revolution must be decreed and organized either by a dictatorship or by a constituent assembly emerging from a political revolution, our friends, the Paris socialists, believed that revolution could neither be made nor brought to its full development except by the spontaneous and continued action of the masses, the groups and the associations of the people.

Our Paris friends were right a thousand times over. In fact, where is the mind, brilliant as it may be, or - if we speak of a collective dictatorship, even if it were formed of several hundred individuals endowed with superior mentalities - where are the intellects powerful enough to embrace the infinite multiplicity and diversity of real interests, aspirations, wishes and needs which sum up the collective will of the people? And to invent a social organization that will not be a Procrustean bed upon which the violence of the State will more or less overtly force unhappy society to stretch out? It has always been thus, and it is exactly this old system of organization by force that the Social Revolution should end by granting full liberty to the masses, the groups, the communes, the associations and to the individuals as well; by destroying once and for all the historic cause of all violence, which is the power and indeed the mere existence of the State. Its fall will bring down with it all the inequities of the law and all the lies of the various religions, since both law and religion have never been anything but the compulsory consecration, ideal and real, of all violence represented, guaranteed, and protected by the State.

It is obvious that liberty will never be given to humanity, and that the real interests of society, of all groups, local associations, and individuals who make up society will never be satisfied until there are no longer any states. It is obvious that all the so-called general interests of society, which the State is supposed to represent and which are in reality just a general and constant negation of the true interests of regions, communes, associations, and individuals subject to the State, are a mere abstraction, a fiction, a lie. The State is like a vast slaughterhouse or an enormous cemetery, where all the real aspirations, all the living forces of a country enter generously and happily, in the shadow of that abstraction, to let themselves be slain and buried. And just as no abstraction exists for and by itself, having no legs to stand on, no arms to create with, no stomach to digest the mass of victims delivered to it, it is likewise clear that the celestial or religious abstraction, God, actually represents the very real interests of a class, the clergy, while its terrestrial complement, that political abstraction, the State, represents the no less real interests of the exploiting class which tends to absorb all the others - the bourgeoisie. As the clergy has always been divisive, and nowadays tends to separate men even further into a very powerful and wealthy minority and a sad and rather wretched majority, so likewise the bourgeoisie, with its various social and political organizations in industry, agriculture, banking, and commerce, as well as in all administrative, financial, judiciary, education, police, and military functions of the State tend increasingly to weld all of these into a really dominant oligarchy on the one hand, and on the other hand into an enormous mass of more or less hopeless creatures, defrauded creatures who live in a perpetual illusion, steadily and inevitably pushed down into the proletariat by the irresistible force of the present economic development, and reduced to serving as blind tools of this all-powerful oligarchy.

The abolition of the Church and the State should be the first and indispensable condition for the real enfranchisement of society which can and should reorganize itself not from the top down according to an ideal plan dressed up by wise men or scholars nor by decrees promulgated by some dictatorial power or even by a national assembly elected through universal suffrage. Such a system, as I have already said, would inevitably lead to the creation of a new state and, consequently, to the formation of a ruling aristocracy, that is, an entire class of persons who have nothing in common with the masses. And, of course, this class would exploit and subject the masses, under the pretext of serving the common welfare or saving the State.

The future social organization should be carried out from the bottom up, by the free association or federation of workers, starting with the associations, then going on to the communes, the regions, the nations, and, finally, culminating in a great international and universal federation. It is only then that the true, life-giving social order of liberty and general welfare will come into being, a social order which, far from restricting, will affirm and reconcile the interests of individuals and of society.

It is said that the harmony and universal solidarity of individuals with society can never be attained in practice because their interests, being antagonistic, can never be reconciled. To this objection I reply that if these interest have never as yet come to mutual accord, it was because the State has sacrificed the interests of the majority for the benefit of a privileged minority. That is why this famous incompatibility, this conflict of personal interests with those of society, is nothing but a fraud, a political lie, born of the theological lie which invented the doctrine of original sin in order to dishonor man and destroy his self-respect. The same false idea concerning irreconcilable interests was also fostered by the dreams of metaphysics which, as we know, is close kin to theology. Metaphysics, failing to recognize the social character of human nature, looked upon society as a mechanical and purely artificial aggregate of individuals, suddenly brought together in the name of some formal or secret compact concluded freely or under the influence of a superior power. Before uniting in society, these individuals, endowed with some sort of immortal soul, enjoyed complete liberty, according to the metaphysicians. We are convinced that all the wealth of man's intellectual, moral, and material development, as well as his apparent independence, is the product of his life in society. Outside society, not only would he not be a free man, he would not even become genuinely human, a being conscious of himself, the only being who thinks and speaks. Only the combination of intelligence and collective labor was able to force man out of that savage and brutish state which constituted his original nature, or rather the starting point for his further development. We are profoundly convinced that the entire life of men - their interests, tendencies, needs, illusions, even stupidities, as well as very bit of violence, injustice, and seemingly voluntary activity - merely represent the result of inevitable societal forces. People cannot reject the idea of mutual independence, nor can they deny the reciprocal influence and uniformity exhibiting the manifestations of external nature.

In nature herself, this marvelous correlation and interdependence of phenomena certainly is not produced without struggle. On the contrary, the harmony of the forces of nature appears only as the result of a continual struggle, which is the real condition of life and of movement. In nature, as in society, order without struggle is death.

If order is natural and possible in the universe, it is only because the universe is not governed according to some pre imagined system imposed by a supreme will. The theological hypothesis of divine legislation leads to an obvious absurdity, to the negation not only of all order but of nature herself. Natural laws are real only in that they are inherent in nature; that is, they are not established by any authority. These laws are but simple manifestations, or rather continuous variations, of the uniformities constituting what we call 'nature.' Human intelligence and its science have observed them, have checked them experimentally, assembled them into a system and called them laws. But nature as such knows no laws. She acts unconsciously; she represents in herself the infinite variety of phenomena which appear and repeat themselves inevitably. This inevitability of action is the reason the universal order can and does exist.

Such an order is also apparent in human society, which seems to have evolved in an allegedly anti natural way but actually is determined by the natural animal's needs and his capacity for thinking that have contributed a special element to his development - a completely natural element, by the way, in the sense that men, like everything that exists, represent the material product of the union and action of natural forces. This special element is reason, the captivity for generalization and abstraction, thanks to which man is able to project himself in his thought, examining and observing himself like a strange, eternal object. By lifting himself in thought above himself, and above the world around him, he reaches the representation of perfect abstraction the absolute void. And this absolute is nothing less than his capacity for abstraction, which disdains all that exists and finds its repose in attaining complete negation. This is the ultimate limit of the highest abstraction of the mind; this absolute nothingness is God.

This is the meaning and the historical foundation of every theological doctrine. As they did not understand the nature and the material causes of their own thinking, and did not even grasp the conditions or natural laws underlying such thinking, these early men and early societies had not the slightest suspicion that their absolute notions were simply the result of their own capacity for formulating abstract ideas. Hence they viewed these ideas, drawn from nature, as real objects, next to which nature herself ceased to amount to anything. They began to worship their fictions, their improbably notions of the absolute, and to honor them. But since they felt the need of giving some concrete form to the abstract idea of nothingness or of God, they created the concept of divinity and, furthermore, endowed it with all the qualities and powers, good and evil, which they found only in nature and in society. Such was the origin and historical development of all religions, from fetishism on down to Christianity.

We do not intend to undertake a study of the history of religious, theological, and metaphysical absurdities or to discuss the procession of all the divine incarnations and visions created by centuries of barbarism. We all know that superstition brought disaster and caused rivers of blood and tears to flow. All these revolting aberrations of poor mankind were historical, inevitable stages in the normal growth and evolution of social organizations. Such aberrations engendered the fatal idea, which dominated men's imagination, that the universe was governed by a supernatural power and will. Centuries came and went, and societies grew accustomed to this idea to such an extent that they finally destroyed any urge toward or capacity to achieve further progress which arose in their midst.

The lust for power of a few individuals originally, and of several social classes later, established slavery and conquest as the dominant principle, and implanted this terrible idea of divinity in the heart of society. Thereafter no society was viewed as feasible without these two institutions, the Church and the State, at its base. These two social scourges are defended by all their doctrinaire apologists.

No sooner did these institutions appear in the world than two ruling classes - the priests and the aristocrats - promptly organized themselves and lost no time in indoctrinating the enslaved people with the idea of the utility, indispensability, and sacredness of the Church and of the State.

Ethics: Morality of the State by Mikhail Bakunin 1814-1876

From "*The Political Philosophy of Bakunin*"
by G.P. Maximoff

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The Theory of Social Contract. Man is not only the most individual being on earth-he is also the most social being. It was a great fallacy on the part of Jean Jacques Rousseau to have assumed that primitive society was established by a free contract entered into by savages. But Rousseau was not the only one to uphold such views. The majority of jurists and modern writers, whether of the Kantian school or of other individualist and liberal schools, who do not accept the theological idea of society being founded upon divine right, nor that of the Hegelian school - of society as the more or less mystic realization of objective morality - nor the primitive animal society of the naturalist school - take *volens volens*, for lack of any other foundation, the *tacit contract*, as their point of departure.

A tacit contract! That is to say, a wordless, and consequently a thoughtless and will-less contract: a revolting nonsense! An absurd fiction, and what is more, a wicked fiction! An unworthy hoax! For it assumes that while I was in a state of not being able to will, to think, to speak, I bound myself and all my descendants-only by virtue of having let myself be victimized without raising any protest - into perpetual slavery.

Lack of Moral Discernment in the State Preceding the Original Social Contract. From the point of view of the system which we are now examining the distinction between good and bad did not exist prior to the conclusion of the social contract. At that time every individual remained isolated in his liberty or in his absolute right, paying no attention to the freedom of others except in those cases wherein such attention was dictated by his weakness or his relative strength - in other words, by his own prudence and interest. At that time egoism, according to the same theory, was the supreme law, the only extant right. The good was determined by success, the bad only by failure, and justice was simply the consecration of the accomplished fact, however horrible, cruel, or infamous it might be - as is the rule in the political morality which now prevails in Europe.

The Social Contract as the Criterion of Good and Bad. The distinction between good and bad, according to this system, began only with the conclusion of the social contract. All that which had been recognized as constituting the general interest was declared to be the good, and everything contrary to it, the bad. Members of society who entered into this compact having become citizens, having bound themselves by solemn obligations, assumed thereby the duty of subordinating their private interests to the common wealth, to the inseparable interest of all. They also divorced their individual rights from public rights, the only representative of which - the State - was thereby invested with the power to suppress all the revolts of individual egoism, having, however, the duty of protecting every one of its members in the exercise of his rights in so far as they did not run counter to the general rights of the community.

The State Formed by the Social Contract Is the Modern Atheistic State. Now we are going to examine the nature of the relations which the State, thus constituted, is bound to enter into with other similar States, and also its relations to the population which it governs. Such an analysis appears to us to be the more interesting and useful inasmuch as the State, as defined here, is precisely the modern State in so far as it is divorced from the religious idea: it is the lay State or the atheist State proclaimed by modern writers.

Let us then see wherein this morality consists. The modern State, as we have said, has freed itself from the yoke of the Church and consequently has shaken off the yoke of universal or cosmopolitan morality of the Christian religion, but it has not yet become permeated with the humanitarian idea or ethics - which it cannot do without destroying itself, for in its detached existence and isolated concentration the State is much too narrow to embrace, to contain the interests and consequently the morality of, humanity as a whole.

Ethics Identified with State Interests. Modern States have arrived precisely at that point. Christianity serves them only as a pretext and a phrase, only as a means to fool the simpletons, for the aims pursued by them have nothing in common with religious goals. And the eminent statesmen of our times - the Palmerstons, the Muravievs, the Cavours, the Bismarcks, the Napoleons, would laugh a great deal if their openly professed religious convictions were taken seriously. They would laugh even more if anyone attributed to them humanitarian sentiments, considerations, and intentions, which they have always treated publicly as mere silliness. Then what constitutes their morality? Only State interests. From this point of view, which, with very few exceptions, has been the point of view of statesmen, of *strong men* of all times and all countries, all that is instrumental in conserving, exalting, and consolidating the power of the State is good-sacrilegious though it might be from a religious point of view and revolting as it might appear from the point of view of human morality - and vice versa, whatever militates against the interests of the State is bad, even if it be in other respects the most holy and humanely just thing. Such is the true morality and secular practice of all States.

The Collective Egoism of Particular Associations Raised into Ethical Categories. Such also is the morality of the State founded upon the theory of a social contract. According to this system, the good and the just, since they begin only with the social contract, are in fact nothing but the content and the end purpose of the contract - that is to say, *the common interest and the public right of all individuals who formed this contract, with the exception of those who remained outside of it*. Consequently, by good in this system is meant only the greatest satisfaction given to the collective egoism of a particular and limited association, which, being founded upon the partial sacrifice of the individual egoism of every one of its members, excludes from its midst, as strangers and natural enemies, the vast majority of the human species whether or not it is formed into similar associations.

Morality Is Co-Extensive Only With the Boundaries of Particular States. The existence of a single limited State necessarily presupposed the existence, and if necessary provokes the formation of several States, it being quite natural that the individuals who find themselves outside of this State and who are menaced by it in their existence and liberty, should in turn league themselves against it. Here we have humanity broken up into an indefinite number of States which are foreign, hostile, and menacing toward one another.

There is no common right, and no social contract among them, for if such a contract and right existed, the various States would cease to be absolutely independent of one another, becoming federated members of one great State. Unless this great State embraces humanity as a whole, it will necessarily have against it the hostility of other great States, federated internally. Thus war would always be supreme law and the inherent necessity of the very existence of humanity.

Jungle Law Governs Interrelations of States. Every State, whether it is of a federative or a non-federative character, must seek, under the penalty of utter ruin, to become the most powerful of States. It has to devour others in order not to be devoured in turn, to conquer in order not to be conquered, to enslave in order not to be enslaved - for two similar and at the same time alien powers, cannot co-exist without destroying each other.

The Universal Solidarity of Humanity Disrupted by the State. *The state then is the most flagrant negation, the most cynical and complete negation of humanity.* It rends apart the universal solidarity of all men upon earth, and it unites some of them only in order to destroy, conquer, and enslave all the rest. It takes under its protection only its own citizens, and it recognizes human right, humanity, and civilization only within the confines of its own boundaries. And since it does not recognize any right outside of its own confines, it quite logically arrogated to itself the right to treat with the most ferocious inhumanity all the foreign populations whom it can pillage, exterminate, or subordinate to its will. If it displays generosity or humanity toward them, it does it in no case out of any sense of duty: and that is because it has no duty but to itself, and toward those of its members who formed it by an act of free agreement, who continue constituting it on the same free bases, or, as it happens in the long run, have become its subjects.

Since international law does not exist, and since it never can exist in a serious and real manner without undermining the very foundations of the principle of absolute State sovereignty, the State cannot have any duties toward foreign populations. If then it treats humanely a conquered people, if it does not go to the full length in pillaging and exterminating it, and does not reduce it to the last degree of slavery, it does so perhaps because of considerations of political expediency and prudence, or even because of pure magnanimity, but never because of duty - for it has an absolute right to dispose of them in any way it deems fit.

Patriotism Runs Counter to Ordinary Human Morality. This flagrant negation of humanity, which constitutes the very essence of the State, is from the point of view of the latter the supreme duty and the greatest virtue: it is called *patriotism* and it constitutes the *transcendent morality* of the State. We call it the transcendent morality because ordinarily it transcends the level of human morality and justice, whether private or common, and thereby it often sets itself in sharp contradiction to them. Thus, for instance, to offend, oppress, rob, plunder, assassinate, or enslave one's fellow man is, to the ordinary morality of man, to commit a serious crime.

In public life, on the contrary, from the point of view of patriotism, when it is done for the greater glory of the State in order to conserve or to enlarge its power, all that becomes a duty and a virtue. And this duty, this virtue, are obligatory upon every patriotic citizen. Everyone is expected to discharge those duties not only in respect to strangers but in respect to his fellow citizens, members and subjects of the same State, whenever the welfare of the State demands it from him.

The Supreme Law of the State. The supreme law of the State is self-preservation at any cost. And since all States, ever since they came to exist upon the earth, have been condemned to perpetual struggle - a struggle against their own populations, whom they oppress and ruin, a struggle against all foreign States, every one of which can be strong only if the others are weak - and since the States cannot hold their own in this struggle unless they constantly keep on augmenting their power against their own subjects as well as against the neighborhood States - it follows that the supreme law of the State is the augmentation of its power to the detriment of internal liberty and external justice.

The State Aims to Take the Place of Humanity. Such is in its stark reality the sole morality, the sole aim of the State. It worships God himself only because he is its own exclusive God, the sanction of its power and of that which it calls its right, that is, the right to exist at any cost and always to expand at the cost of other States. Whatever serves to promote this end is worthwhile, legitimate, and virtuous. Whatever harms it is criminal. The morality of the State then is the reversal of human justice and human morality.

This transcendent, super-human, and therefore anti-human morality of States is not only the result of the corruption of men who are charged with carrying on State functions. One might say with greater right that corruption of men is the natural and necessary sequel of the State institution. This morality is only the development of the fundamental principle of the State, the inevitable expression of its inherent necessity. The State is nothing else but the negation of humanity; it is a limited collectivity which aims to take the place of humanity and which wants to impose itself upon the latter as a supreme goal, while everything else is to submit and minister to it.

The Idea of Humanity, Absent in Ancient Times, Has Become a Power in Our Present Life. That was natural and easily understood in ancient times when the very idea of humanity was unknown, and when every people worshiped its exclusively national gods, who gave it the right of life and death over all other nations. Human right existed only in relation to the citizens of the State. Whatever remained outside of the State was doomed to pillage, massacre, and slavery.

Now things have changed. The idea of humanity becomes more and more of a power in the civilized world, and, owing to the expansion and increasing speed of means of communication, and also owing to the influence, still more material than moral, of civilization upon barbarous peoples, this idea of humanity begins to take hold even of the minds of uncivilized nations. This idea is the invisible power of our century, with which the present powers - the States - must reckon. They cannot submit to it of their own free will because such submission on their part would be equivalent to suicide, since the triumph of humanity can be realized only through the destruction of the States. But the States can no longer deny this idea nor openly rebel against it, for having now grown too strong, it may finally destroy them.

The State Has to Recognize In Its Own Hypocritical Manner the Powerful Sentiment of Humanity. In the face of this fainful alternative there remains only one way out: and that it hypocrisy. The States pay their outward respects to this idea of humanity; they speak and apparently act only in the name of it, but they violate it every day. This, however, should not be held against the States. They cannot act otherwise, their position having become such that they can hold their own only by lying. Diplomacy has no other mission.

Therefore what do we see? Every time a State wants to declare war upon another State, it starts off by launching a manifesto addressed not only to its own subjects but to the whole world. In this manifesto it declares that right and justice are on its side, and it endeavors to prove that it is actuated only by love of peace and humanity and that, imbued with generous and peaceful sentiments, it suffered for a long time in silence until the mounting iniquity of its enemy forced it to bare its sword. At the same time it vows that, disdainful of all material conquest and not seeking any increase in territory, it will put an end to this war as soon as justice is reestablished. And its antagonist answers with a similar manifesto, in which naturally right, justice, humanity, and all the generous sentiments are to be found respectively on its side.

Those mutually opposed manifestos are written with the same eloquence, they breathe the same virtuous indignation, and one is just as sincere as the other; that is to say both of them are equally brazen in their lies, and it is only fools who are deceived by them. Sensible persons, all those who have had some political experience, do not even take the trouble of reading such manifestos. On the contrary, they seek ways to uncover the interests driving both adversaries into this war, and to weigh the respective power of each of them in order to guess the outcome of the struggle. Which only goes to prove that moral issues are not at stake in such wars.

Perpetual War Is the Price of the State's Existence. The rights of peoples, as well as the treaties regulating the relations of the States, lack any moral sanction. In every definite historic epoch they are the material expression of the equilibrium resulting from the mutual antagonism of States. So long as States exist, there will be no peace. There will be only more or less prolonged respites, armistices concluded by the perpetually belligerent States; but as soon as the State feels sufficiently strong to destroy this equilibrium to its advantage, it will never fail to do so. The history of humanity fully bears out this point.

Crimes Are the Moral Climate of States. This explains to us why ever since history began, that is, ever since States came into existence, the political world has always been and still continues to be the stage for high knavery and unsurpassed brigandage - brigandage and knavery which are held in high honor, since they are ordained by patriotism, transcendent morality, and by the supreme interest of the State. This explains to us why all the history of ancient and modern States is nothing more than a series of revolting crimes; why present and past kings and ministers of all times and of all countries - statesmen, diplomats, bureaucrats, and warriors - if judged from the point of view of simple morality and human justice, deserve a thousand times the gallows of penal servitude.

For there is no terror, cruelty, sacrilege, perjury, imposture, infamous transaction, cynical theft, brazen robbery or foul treason which has not been committed and all are still being committed daily by representatives of the State, with no other excuse than this elastic, at times so convenient and terrible phrase *Reason of State*. A terrible phrase indeed! For it has corrupted and dishonored more people in official circles and in the governing classes of society than Christianity itself. As soon as it is uttered everything becomes silent and drops out of sight: honesty, honor, justice, right, pity itself vanishes and with it logic and sound sense; black becomes white and white becomes black, the horrible becomes humane, and the most dastardly felonies and most atrocious crimes become meritorious acts.

Crime - the Privilege of the State. What is permitted to the State is forbidden to the individual. Such is the maxim of all governments. Machiavelli said it, and history as well as the practice of all contemporary governments bear him out on that point. Crime is the necessary condition of the very existence of the State, and it therefore constitutes its exclusive monopoly, from which it follows that the individual who dares commit a crime is guilty in a two-fold sense: first, he is guilty against human conscience, and, above all, he is guilty against the State in arrogating to himself one of its most precious privileges.

State Morality According to Machiavelli. The great Italian political philosopher, Machiavelli, was the first who gave currency to this phrase (*reason of State*), or at least he gave it its true meaning and the immense popularity which it has enjoyed ever since in governmental circles. Realistic and positive thinker that he was, he came to understand - and he was the first one in this respect - that the great and powerful States could be founded and maintained only by crime - by many great crimes - and by a thorough contempt for anything called honesty.

He wrote, explained, and argued his case with terrible frankness. And since the idea of humanity was wholly ignored in his time; since the idea of fraternity - not human, but religious - preached by the Catholic Church had been, as it always is, nothing but a ghastly irony belied at every instant by the acts of the Church itself; since in his time no one believed that there, was such a thing as popular rights - the people having been considered an inert and inept mass, a sort of cannon-fodder for the State, to be taxed impressed into forced labor and kept in a state of eternal obedience; in view of all this Machiavelli arrived quite logically at the idea that the State was the supreme goal of human existence, that it had to be served at any cost, and that since the interest of the State stood above everything else, a good patriot should not recoil from any crime in order to serve the State.

Machiavelli counsels recourse to crime, urges it, and makes it the *sine qua non* of political intelligence as well as of true patriotism. Whether the State is called monarchy or republic, crime will always be necessary to maintain and assure its triumph. This crime will no doubt change its direction and object, but its nature will remain the same. It will always be the forced and abiding violation of justice and of honesty - for the good of the State.

Wherein Machiavelli Was Wrong. Yes, Machiavelli was right: we cannot doubt it now that we have the experience of three and a half centuries added to his own experience. Yes, History tells us that while small States are virtuous because of their feebleness, powerful States sustain themselves only through crime. But our conclusion will differ radically from that of Machiavelli, and the reason thereof is quite simple: we are the sons of the Revolution and we have inherited from it the Religion of Humanity which we have to found upon the ruins of the Religion of Divinity. We believe in the rights of man, in the dignity and necessary emancipation of the human species. We believe in human liberty and human fraternity based upon human justice.

Patriotism Deciphered. We have already seen that by excluding the vast majority of humanity from its midst, by placing it outside of the obligations and reciprocal duties of morality, of justice, and of right, the State denies humanity with this high-sounding word, *Patriotism*, and imposes injustice and cruelty upon all of its subjects as their supreme duty.

Man's Original Wickedness - the Theoretical Premise of the State. Every State, like every theology, assumes that man is essentially wicked and bad. In the State which we are going to examine now, *the good*, as we have already seen, begins with the conclusion of the social contract, and therefore is only the product of this contract - its very content. It is not the product of liberty. On the contrary, so long as men remain isolated in their absolute individuality, enjoying all their natural liberty, recognizing no limits to this liberty but those imposed by fact and not by right, they follow only one law - the law of natural egoism.

They insult, maltreat, rob, murder, and devour one another, everyone according to the measure of his intelligence, of his cunning, and of his material forces, as is now being done by the States. Hence human liberty produces not good but evil, man being *bad* by nature. How did he become bad? That is for theology to explain. The fact is that the State, when it came into existence, found man already in that state and it set for itself the task of making him good; that is to say, of transforming the natural man into a citizen.

One might say to this that inasmuch as the State is the product of a contract freely concluded by men and since good is the product of the State, it follows that it is the product of liberty. This, however, would be an utterly wrong conclusion. The State, even according to this theory, is not the product of liberty, but, on the contrary, the product of the voluntary negation and sacrifice of liberty. Natural men, absolutely free from the point of view of *right*, but *in fact* exposed to all the dangers which at every instant of their lives menace their security, in order to assure and safeguard the latter sacrifice, abdicate a greater or lesser portion of their liberty, and inasmuch as they sacrifice it for the sake of their security, insofar as they become citizens, they also become the *slaves of the State*. Therefore we have the right to affirm that from the point of view of the State the good *arises not from liberty, but, on the contrary, from the negation of liberty*.

Theology and Politics. Is it not remarkable, this similitude between theology (the science of the Church) and politics (the theory of the State), this convergence of two apparently contrary orders of thoughts and facts upon one and the same conviction: that of the necessity of sacrificing human liberty in order to make men into moral beings and transform them into saints, according to some, and virtuous citizens, according to others? As for us, we are hardly surprised at it, for we are convinced that politics and theology are both closely related, stemming from the same origin and pursuing the same aim under two different names; we are convinced that every State is a terrestrial Church, just as every Church with its Heaven the abode of the blessed and the immortal gods - is nothing but a celestial State.

The Similarity of the Ethical Premises of Theology and Politics. The State then, like the Church, starts with this fundamental assumption that all men are essentially bad and that when left to their natural liberty they will tear one another apart and will offer the spectacle of the most frightful anarchy wherein the strongest will kill or exploit the weaker ones. And is not this just the contrary of what is now taking place in our exemplary States?

Likewise the State posits as a principle the following tenet: In order to establish public order it is necessary to have a superior authority; in order to guide men and repress their wicked passions, it is necessary to have a leader, and also to impose a curb upon the people, but this authority must be vested in a man of virtuous genius, a legislator for his people, like Moses, Lycurgus, or Solon - and that leader and that curb will embody the wisdom and the repressive power of the State.

Society not a Product of a Contract. The State is a transitory historic form, a passing form of society - like the Church, of which it is a younger brother - but it lacks the necessary and immutable character of society which is anterior to all development of humanity and which, partaking fully of the almighty power of natural laws, acts, and manifestations, constitutes the very basis of human existence. Man is born into society just as an ant is born into its ant-hill or a bee into its hive; man is born into society from the very moment that he takes his first step toward humanity, from the moment that he becomes a human being that is, a being possessing to a greater or lesser extent the power of thought and speech. Man does not choose society; on the contrary, he is the product of the latter, and he is just as inevitably subject to the natural laws governing his essential development as to all the other natural laws which he must obey.

Revolt Against Society Inconceivable. Society antedates and at the same time survives every human individual, being in this respect like Nature itself. It is eternal like Nature, or rather, having been born upon our earth it will last as long as the earth. A radical revolt against society would therefore be just as impossible for man as a revolt against Nature, human society being nothing else but the last great manifestation or creation of Nature upon this earth. And an individual who would want to rebel against society that is, against Nature in general and his own nature in particular - would place himself beyond the pale of real existence, would plunge into nothingness, into an absolute void, into lifeless abstraction, into God.

So it follows that it is just as impossible to ask whether society is good or evil as it is to ask whether Nature - the universal, material, real, absolute, soul and supreme being - is good or evil. It is much more than that: it is an immense, positive, and primitive fact, having had existence prior to all consciousness, to all ideas, to all intellectual and moral discernment; it is the very basis, it is the world in which, inevitably and at a much later stage, there began to develop that which we call good and evil.

The State a Historically Necessary Evil. It is not so with the State. And I do not hesitate to say that the State is an evil but a historically necessary evil, as necessary in the past as its complete extinction will be necessary sooner or later, just as necessary as primitive bestiality and theological divinations were necessary in the past. The State is not society; it is only one of its historical forms, as brutal as it is abstract in character. Historically, it arose in all countries out of the marriage of violence, rapine, and pillage - in a word, of war and conquest - with the Gods created in succession by the theological fancies of the nations. From its very beginning it has been - and still remains - the divine sanction of brutal force and triumphant iniquity. Even

in the most democratic countries, like the United States of America and Switzerland, it is simply the consecration of the privileges of some minority and the actual enslavement of the vast majority.

Revolt Against the State. Revolt against the State is much easier because there is something in the nature of the State which provokes rebellion. The State is authority, it is force, it is the ostentatious display of and infatuation with Power. It does not seek to ingratiate itself, to win over, to convert. Every time it intervenes, it does so with particularly bad grace. For by its very nature it cannot persuade but must impose and exert force. However hard it may try to disguise this nature, it will still remain the legal violator of man's will and the permanent denial of his liberty.

Morality Presupposes Freedom. And even when the State enjoins something good, it undoes and spoils it precisely because the latter comes in the form of a command, and because every command provokes and arouses the legitimate revolt of freedom; and also because, from the point of view of true morality, of human and not divine morality, the good which is done by command from above ceases to be good and thereby becomes evil, Liberty, morality, and the humane dignity of man consist precisely in that man does good not because he is ordered to do so, but because he conceives it, wants it, and loves it.

Stateless Socialism: Anarchism by Mikhail Bakunin 1814 - 1876

From *"The Political Philosophy of Bakunin"*

by G.P. Maximoff

1953, The Free Press, NY

Effect of the Great Principles Proclaimed by the French Revolution. From the time when the Revolution brought down to the masses its Gospel - not the mystic but the rational, not the heavenly but the earthly, not the divine but the human Gospel, the Gospel of the Rights of Man - ever since it proclaimed that all men are equal, that all men are entitled to liberty and equality, the masses of all European countries, of all the civilized world, awakening gradually from the sleep which had kept them in

bondage ever since Christianity drugged them with its opium, began to ask themselves whether they too, had the right to equality, freedom, and humanity.

As soon as this question was posed, the people, guided by their admirable sound sense as well as by their instincts, realized that the first condition of their real emancipation, or of their *humanization*, was above all a radical change in their economic situation. The question of daily bread is to them justly the first question, for as it was noted by Aristotle, man, in order to think, in order to feel himself free, in order to become man, must be freed from the material cares of daily life. For that matter, the bourgeois, who are so vociferous in their outcries against the materialism of the people and who preach to the latter the abstinences of idealism, know it very well, for they themselves preach it only by word and not by example.

The second question arising before the people - that of leisure after work - is the indispensable condition of humanity. But bread and leisure can never be obtained apart from a radical transformation of existing society, and that explains why the Revolution, impelled by the implications of its own principles, gave birth to Socialism.

Socialism Is Justice....Socialism is *justice*. When we speak of justice, we understand thereby not the justice contained in the Codes and in Roman jurisprudence - which were based to a great extent upon facts of violence achieved by force, violence consecrated by time and by the benedictions of some church or other (Christian or pagan), and as such accepted as absolute principles, from which all law is to be deduced by a process of logical reasoning - no, we speak of that justice which is based solely upon human conscience, the justice to be found in the consciousness of every man - even in that of children - and which can be expressed in a single word: *equity*.

This universal justice which, owing to conquests by force and religious influences, has never yet prevailed in the political or juridical or economic worlds, should become the basis of the new world. Without it there can be neither liberty, nor republic, nor prosperity, nor peace. It then must govern our resolutions in order that we work effectively toward the establishment of peace. And this justice urges us to take upon ourselves the defense of the interests of the terribly maltreated people and demand their economic and social emancipation along with political freedom.

The Basic Principle of Socialism. We do not propose here, gentlemen, this or any other socialist system. What we demand now is the proclaiming anew of the great principle of the French Revolution: that *every human being should have the material and moral means to develop all his humanity*, a principle which, in our opinion, is to be translated into the following problem:

To organize society in such a manner that every individual, man or woman, should find, upon entering life, approximately equal means for the development of his or her diverse faculties and their utilization in his or her work. And to organize such a society that, rendering impossible the exploitation of anyone's labor, will enable every individual to enjoy the social wealth, which in reality is produced only by collective labor, but to enjoy it only in so far as he contributes directly toward the creation of that wealth.

State Socialism Rejected. The carrying out of this task will of course take centuries of development. But history has already brought it forth and henceforth we cannot ignore it without condemning ourselves to utter impotence. We hasten to add here that we vigorously reject any attempt at social organization which would not admit the fullest liberty of individuals and organizations, or which would require the setting up of any regimenting power whatever. In the name of freedom, which we recognize as the only foundation and the only creative principle of organization, economic or political, we shall protest against anything remotely resembling State Communism, or State Socialism.

Abolition of the Inheritance Law. The only thing which, in opinion, the State can and should do, is first to modify little by little inheritance law so as to arrive as soon as possible at its complete abolition. That law being purely a creation of the State, and one of the conditions of the very existence of the authoritarian and divine State can and should be abolished by freedom in the State. In other words, State should dissolve itself into a society freely organized in accord with the principles of justice. Inheritance right, in our opinion, should be abolished, for so long as it exists there will be hereditary economic inequality, not the natural inequality of individuals, but the artificial man inequality of classes - and the latter will always beget hereditary equality in the development and shaping of minds, continuing to be source and consecration of all political and social inequalities. The task of justice is to establish equality for everyone, inasmuch that equality will depend upon the economic and political organization society - an equality with which everyone is going to begin his life, that everyone, guided by his own nature, will be the product of his own efforts. In our opinion, the property of the deceased should accrue to social fund for the instruction and education of children of both sexes including their maintenance from birth until they come of age. As Slavs and as Russians, we shall add that with us the fundamental social idea, bas upon the general and traditional instinct of our populations, is that *the property of all the people, should be owned only by those who cultivate it with their own hands*.

We are convinced gentlemen, that this principle is just, that it is essential and inevitable condition of all serious social reform, and consequently Western Europe in turn will not fail to recognize and accept this principle, notwithstanding the difficulties of its realization in countries as in France, for instance where the majority of peasants own the land which they cultivate, but where most of those very peasants will soon end up by owning next to nothing, owing to the parceling out of land coming as the inevitable result of the political and economic system now prevailing in France. We shall, however, refrain from offering any proposals on the land question...We shall confine ourselves now to proposing the following declaration:

The Declaration of Socialism. "Convinced that the serious realization of liberty, justice, and peace will be impossible so long as the majority of the population remains dispossessed of elementary needs, so long as it is deprived of education and is condemned to political and social insignificance and slavery - in fact if not by law - by poverty as well as by the necessity of working without rest or leisure, producing all the wealth upon which the world now prides itself, and receiving in return only such a small pan thereof that it hardly suffices to assure its livelihood for the next day;

"Convinced that for all that mass of population, terribly maltreated for centuries, the problem of bread is the problem of mental emancipation, of freedom and humanity;

"Convinced that freedom without Socialism is privilege and injustice and that Socialism without freedom is slavery and brutality;

"The League [for Peace and Freedom] loudly proclaims the necessity of a radical social and economic reconstruction, having for its aim the emancipation of people's labor from the yoke of capital and property owners, a reconstruction based upon strict justice - neither juridical nor theological nor metaphysical justice, but simply human justice - upon positive science and upon the widest freedom."

Organization of Productive Forces in Place of Political Power. It is necessary to abolish completely, both in principle and in fact, all that which is called political power; for, so long as political power exists, there will be ruler and ruled, masters and slaves, exploiters and exploited. Once abolished, political power should be replaced by an organization of productive forces and economic service.

Notwithstanding the enormous development of modern states - a development which in its ultimate phase is quite logically reducing the State to an absurdity - it is becoming evident that the days of the State and the State principle are numbered. Already we can see approaching the full emancipation of the toiling masses and their free social organization, free from governmental intervention, formed by economic associations of the people and brushing aside all the old State frontiers and national distinctions, and having as its basis only productive labor, humanized labor, having one common interest in spite of its diversity.

The Ideal of the People. This ideal of course appears to the people as signifying first of all the end of want, the end of poverty, and the full satisfaction of all material needs by means of collective labor, equal and obligatory for all, and then, as the end of domination and the free organization of the people's lives in accordance with their needs - not from the top down, as we have it in the State, but from the bottom up, an organization formed by the people themselves, apart from all governments and parliaments, a free union of associations of agricultural and factory workers, of communes, regions, and nations, and finally, in the more remote future; the universal human brotherhood, triumphing above the ruins of all States.

The Program of a Free Society. Outside of the Mazzinian system which is the system of the republic in the form of a State, there is no other system but that of the republic as a commune, the republic as a federation, a Socialist and a genuine people's republic - the system of Anarchism. It is the politics of the Social Revolution, which aims at the abolition of the State, and the economic, altogether free organization of the people, an organization from below upward, by means of a federation.

...There will be no possibility of the existence of a political government, for this government will be transformed into a simple administration of common affairs.

Our program can be summed up in a few words:

Peace, emancipation, and the happiness of the oppressed.

War upon all oppressors and all despoilers.

Full restitution to workers: all the capital, the factories, and all instruments of work and raw materials to go to the associations, and the land to those who cultivate it with their own hands.

Liberty, justice, and fraternity in regard to all human beings upon the earth.

Equality for all.

To all, with no distinction whatever, all the means of development, education, and upbringing, and the equal possibility of living while working.

Organizing of a society by means of a free federation from below upward, of workers associations, industrial as well as a agricultural, scientific as well as literary associations - first into a commune, then a federation communes into regions, of regions into nations, and of nations into international fraternal association.

Correct Tactics During a Revolution. In a social revolution, which in everything is diametrically opposed to a political revolution, the a of individuals hardly count at all, whereas the spontaneous action of masses is everything. All that individuals can do is to clarify, propagate, and work out ideas corresponding to the popular instinct, and, what is more, to contribute their incessant efforts to revolutionary organization of the natural power of the masses - but nothing else beyond that; the rest can and should be done by the people themselves. Any other method would lead to political dictatorship, to the re-emergence of the State, of privileges of inequalities of all the oppressions of the State - that is, it would lead in a roundabout but logical way toward re-establishment of political, social, and economic slavery of the masses of people.

Varlin and all his friends, like all sincere Socialists, and in general like all workers born and brought up among the people, shared to a high degree this perfectly legitimate bias against the initiative coming from isolated individuals, against the domination exercised by superior individuals, and being above all consistent, they extended the same prejudice and distrust to their own persons.

Revolution by Decrees Is Doomed to Failure. Contrary to the ideas of the authoritarian Communists, altogether fallacious ideas in my opinion, that the Social Revolution can be decreed and organized by means of a dictatorship or a Constituent Assembly - our friends, the Parisian Social-Socialists, held the opinion that that revolution can be waged and brought to its full development only through the spontaneous and continued mass action of groups and associations of the people.

Our Parisian friends were a thousand times right. For, indeed, there is no mind, much as it may be endowed with the quality of a genius; or if we speak of a collective dictatorship consisting of several hundred supremely endowed individuals - there is no combination of intellects so vast as to be able to embrace all the infinite multiplicity and diversity of the real interests, aspirations, wills, and needs constituting in their totality the collective will of the people; there is no intellect that can devise a social organization capable of satisfying each and all.

Such an organization would ever be a Procrustean bed into which violence, more or less sanctioned by the State, would force the unfortunate society. But it is this old system of organization based upon force that the Social Revolution should put an end to by giving full liberty to the masses, groups, communes, associations, and even individuals, and by destroying once and for all the historic cause of all violence - the very existence of the State, the fall of which will entail the destruction of all the iniquities of juridical right and all the falsehood of various cults, that right and those cults having ever been simply the complaisant consecration, ideal as well as real, of all violence represented, guaranteed, and authorized by the State.

It is evident that only when the State has ceased to exist humanity will obtain its freedom, and the true interests of society, of all groups, of all local organizations, and likewise of all the individuals forming such organization, will find their real satisfaction.

Free Organization to Follow Abolition of the State. Abolition of the State and the Church should be the first and indispensable condition of the real enfranchisement of society. It will be only after this that society can and should begin its own reorganization; that, however, should take place not from the top down, not according to an ideal plan mapped by a few sages or savants, and not by means of decrees issued by some dictatorial power or even by a National Assembly elected by universal suffrage. Such a system, as I have already said, inevitably would lead to the formation of a governmental aristocracy, that is, a class of persons which has nothing in common with the masses of people; and, to be sure, this class would again turn to exploiting and enthraling the masses under the pretext of common welfare or of the salvation of the State.

Freedom Must Go Hand-in-Hand With Equality. I am a convinced partisan of *economic and social equality*, for I know that outside of this equality, freedom, justice, human dignity, morality, and the well-being of individuals as well as the prosperity of nations are all nothing but so many falsehoods. But being at the same time a partisan of freedom - the first condition of humanity - I believe that equality should be established in the world by a spontaneous organization of labor and collective property, by the free organization of producers' associations into communes, and free federation of communes - but nowise by means of the supreme tutelary action of the State.

The Difference Between Authoritarian and Libertarian Revolution. It is this point which mainly divides the Socialists or revolutionary collectivists from the authoritarian Communists, the partisans of the absolute initiative of the State. The goal of both is the same: both parties want the creation of a new social order based exclusively upon collective labor, under economic conditions that are equal for all - that is, under conditions of collective ownership of the tools of production.

Only the Communists imagine that they can attain through development and organization of the political power of the working classes, and chiefly of the city proletariat, aided by bourgeois radicalism - whereas the revolutionary Socialists, the enemies of all ambiguous alliances, believe, on the contrary, that this common goal can be attained not through the political but through the social (and therefore anti-political) organization and power of the working masses of the cities and villages, including all those who, though belonging by birth to the higher classes, have broken with their past of their own free will, and have openly joined the proletariat and accepted its program.

The Methods of the Communists and the Anarchists. Hence the two different methods. The Communists believe that it is necessary to organize the forces of the workers in order to take possession of the political might of the State. The revolutionary Socialists organize with the view of destroying, or if you prefer a more refined expression, of liquidating the State. The Communists are the partisans of the principle and practice of authority, while revolutionary Socialists place their faith only in freedom. Both are equally the partisans of science, which is to destroy superstition and take the place of faith; but the first want to impose science upon the people, while the revolutionary collectivists try to diffuse science and knowledge among the people, so that the various groups of human society, when convinced by propaganda, may organize and spontaneously combine into federations, in accordance with their natural tendencies and their real interests, but never according to a plan traced in advance and *imposed upon the ignorant masses* by a few "superior" minds.

Revolutionary Socialists believe that there is much more of practical reason and intelligence in the instinctive aspirations and real needs of the masses of people than in the profound minds of all these learned doctors and self-appointed tutors of humanity, who, having before them the sorry examples of so many abortive attempts to make humanity happy, still intend to keep on working in the same direction. But revolutionary Socialists believe, on the contrary, that humanity has permitted itself to be ruled for a long time, much too long, and that the source of its misfortune lies not in this nor in any other form of government but in the principle and the very existence of the government, whatever its nature may be.

It is this difference of opinion, which already has become historic, that now exists between the scientific Communism, developed by the German school and partly accepted by American and English Socialists, and Proudhonism, extensively developed and pushed to its ultimate conclusions, and by now accepted by the proletariat of the Latin countries. Revolutionary Socialism has made its first brilliant and practical appearance in the Paris Commune.

On the Pan-German banner is written: *Retention and strengthening of the State at any cost*. On our banner, the social-revolutionary banner, on the contrary, are inscribed, in fiery and bloody letters: the destruction of all States, the annihilation of bourgeois civilization, free and spontaneous organization from below upward, by means of free associations, the organization of the unbridled rabble of toilers, of all emancipated humanity, and the creation of a new universally human world.

Before creating, or rather aiding the people to create, this new organization, it is necessary to achieve a victory. It is necessary to overthrow that which is, in order to be able to establish that which should be...

The Capitalist System

by Mikhail Bakunin 1814 - 1876

From "*The Political Philosophy of Bakunin*"

by G.P. Maximoff

1953, The Free Press, NY

This pamphlet is an excerpt from *The Knouto-Germanic Empire and the Social Revolution* and included in *The Complete Works of Michael Bakunin* under the title "Fragment." Parts of the text were originally translated into English by G.P. Maximoff for his anthology of Bakunin's writings, with missing paragraphs translated by Jeff Stein from the Spanish edition, Diego Abad de Santillan, trans. (Buenos Aires 1926) vol. III, pp. 181-196.

Is it necessary to repeat here the irrefutable arguments of Socialism which no bourgeois economist has yet succeeded in disproving? What is property, what is capital in their present form? For the capitalist and the property owner they mean the power and the right, guaranteed by the State, to live without working. And since neither property nor capital produces anything when not fertilized by labor - that means the power and the right to live by exploiting the work of someone else, the right to exploit the work of those who possess neither property nor capital and who thus are forced to sell their productive power to the lucky owners of both. Note that I have left out of account altogether the following question: In what way did property and capital ever fall into the hands of their present owners? This is a question which, when envisaged from the points of view of history, logic, and justice, cannot be answered in any other way but one which would serve as an indictment against the present owners. I shall therefore confine myself here to the statement that property owners and capitalists, inasmuch as they live not by their own productive labor but by getting land rent, house rent, interest upon their capital, or by speculation on land, buildings, and capital, or by the commercial and industrial exploitation of the manual labor of the proletariat, all live at the expense of the proletariat. (Speculation and exploitation no doubt also constitute a sort of labor, but altogether non-productive labor.)

I know only too well that this mode of life is highly esteemed in all civilized countries, that it is expressly and tenderly protected by all the States, and that the States, religions, and all the juridical laws, both criminal and civil, and all the political governments, monarchies and republican - with their immense judicial and police apparatuses and their standing armies - have no other mission but to consecrate and protect such practices. In the presence of these powerful and respectable authorities I cannot even permit myself to ask whether this mode of life is legitimate from the point of view of human justice, liberty, human equality, and fraternity. I simply ask myself: Under such conditions, are fraternity and equality possible between the exploiter and the exploited, are justice and freedom possible for the exploited?

Let us even suppose, as it is being maintained by the bourgeois economists and with them all the lawyers, all the worshippers and believers in the juridical right, all the priests of the civil and criminal code - let us suppose that this economic relationship between the exploiter and the exploited is altogether legitimate, that it is the inevitable consequence, the product of an eternal, indestructible social law, yet still it will always be true that exploitation precludes brotherhood and equality. It goes without saying that it precludes economic equality. Suppose I am your worker and you are my employer. If I offer my labor at the lowest price, if I consent to have you live off my labor, it is certainly not because of devotion or brotherly love for you. And no bourgeois economist would dare to say that it was, however idyllic and naive their reasoning becomes when they begin to speak about reciprocal affections and mutual relations which should exist between employers and employees. No, I do it because my

family and I would starve to death if I did not work for an employer. Thus I am forced to sell you my labor at the lowest possible price, and I am forced to do it by the threat of hunger.

But - the economists tell us - the property owners, the capitalists, the employers, are likewise forced to seek out and purchase the labor of the proletariat. Yes, it is true, they are forced to do it, but not in the same measure. Had there been equality between those who offer their labor and those who purchase it, between the necessity of selling one's labor and the necessity of buying it, the slavery and misery of the proletariat would not exist. But then there would be neither capitalists, nor property owners, nor the proletariat, nor rich, nor poor: there would only be workers. It is precisely because such equality does not exist that we have and are bound to have exploiters.

This equality does not exist because in modern society where wealth is produced by the intervention of capital paying wages to labor, the growth of the population outstrips the growth of production, which results in the supply of labor necessarily surpassing the demand and leading to a relative sinking of the level of wages. Production thus constituted, monopolized, exploited by bourgeois capital, is pushed on the one hand by the mutual competition of the capitalists to concentrate evermore in the hands of an ever diminishing number of powerful capitalists, or in the hands of joint-stock companies which, owing to the merging of their capital, are more powerful than the biggest isolated capitalists. (And the small and medium-sized capitalists, not being able to produce at the same price as the big capitalists, naturally succumb in the deadly struggle.) On the other hand, all enterprises are forced by the same competition to sell their products at the lowest possible price. It [capitalist monopoly] can attain this two-fold result only by forcing out an ever-growing number of small or medium-sized capitalists, speculators, merchants, or industrialists, from the world of exploiters into the world of the exploited proletariat, and at the same time squeezing out ever greater savings from the wages of the same proletariat.

On the other hand, the mass of the proletariat, growing as a result of the general increase of the population - which, as we know, not even poverty can stop effectively - and through the increasing proletarianization of the petty-bourgeoisie, ex-owners, capitalists, merchants, and industrialists - growing, as I have said, at a much more rapid rate than the productive capacities of an economy that is exploited by bourgeois capital - this growing mass of the proletariat is placed in a condition wherein the workers are forced into disastrous competition against one another.

For since they possess no other means of existence but their own manual labor, they are driven, by the fear of seeing themselves replaced by others, to sell it at the lowest price. This tendency of the workers, or rather the necessity to which they are condemned by their own poverty, combined with the tendency of the employers to sell the products of their workers, and consequently buy their labor, at the lowest price, constantly reproduces and consolidates the poverty of the proletariat. Since he finds himself in a state of poverty, the worker is compelled to sell his labor for almost nothing, and because he sells that product for almost nothing, he sinks into ever greater poverty.

Yes, greater misery, indeed! For in this galley-slave labor the productive force of the workers, abused, ruthlessly exploited, excessively wasted and underfed, is rapidly used up. And once used up, what can be its value on the market, of what worth is this sole commodity which he possesses and upon the daily sale of which he depends for a livelihood? Nothing! And then? Then nothing is left for the worker but to die.

What, in a given country, is the lowest possible wage? It is the price of that which is considered by the proletarians of that country as absolutely necessary to keep oneself alive. All the bourgeois economists are in agreement on this point. Turgot, who saw fit to call himself the 'virtuous minister' of Louis XVI, and really was an honest man, said:

"The simple worker who owns nothing more than his hands, has nothing else to sell than his labor. He sells it more or less expensively; but its price whether high or low, does not depend on him alone: it depends on an agreement with whoever will pay for his labor. The employer pays as little as possible; when given the choice between a great number of workers, the employer prefers the one who works cheap. The workers are, then, forced to lower their price in competition each against the other. In all types of labor, it necessarily follows that the salary of the worker is limited to what is necessary for survival." (*Reflexions sur la formation et la distribution des richesses*)

J.B. Say, the true father of bourgeois economists in France also said: "Wages are much higher when more demand exists for labor and less if offered, and are lowered accordingly when more labor is offered and less demanded. It is the relation between supply and demand which regulates the price of this merchandise called the workers' labor, as are regulated all other public services. When wages rise a little higher than the price necessary for the workers' families to maintain themselves, their children multiply and a larger supply soon develops in proportion with the greater demand. When, on the contrary, the demand for workers is less than the quantity of people offering to work, their gains decline back to the price necessary for the class to maintain itself at the same number. The families more burdened with children disappear; from them forward the supply of labor declines, and with less labor being offered, the price rises... In such a way it is difficult for the wages of the laborer to rise above or fall below the price necessary to maintain the class (the workers, the proletariat) in the number required." (*Cours complet d'conomie politique*)

After citing Turgot and J.B. Say, Proudhon cries: "The price, as compared to the value (in real social economy) is something essentially mobile, consequently, essentially variable, and that in its variations, it is not regulated more than by the concurrence, concurrence, let us not forget, that as Turgot and Say agree, has the necessary effect not to give to wages to the worker more than enough to barely prevent death by starvation, and maintain the class in the numbers needed."¹

The current price of primary necessities constitutes the prevailing constant level above which workers' wages can never rise for a very long time, but beneath which they drop very often, which constantly results in inanition, sickness, and death, until a sufficient number of workers disappear to equalize again the supply of and demand for labor. What the economists call equalized supply and demand does not constitute real equality between those who offer their labor for sale and those who purchase it. Suppose that I, a manufacturer, need a hundred workers and that exactly a hundred workers present themselves in the market - only one hundred, for if more came, the supply would exceed demand, resulting in lowered wages. But since only one hundred appear, and since I, the manufacturer, need only that number - neither more nor less - it would seem at first that complete equality was established; that supply and demand being equal in number, they should likewise be equal in other respects. Does it follow that the workers can demand from me a wage and conditions of work assuring them of a truly free, dignified, and human existence? Not at all! If I grant them those conditions and those wages, I, the capitalist, shall not gain thereby any more than they will. But then, why should I have to plague myself and become ruined by offering them the profits of my capital? If I want to work myself as workers do, I will invest my capital somewhere else, wherever I can get the highest interest, and will offer my labor for sale to some capitalist just as my workers do.

If, profiting by the powerful initiative afforded me by my capital, I ask those hundred workers to fertilize that capital with their labor, it is not because of my sympathy for their sufferings, nor because of a spirit of justice, nor because of love for humanity. The capitalists are by no means philanthropists; they would be ruined if they practiced philanthropy. It is because I hope to draw from the labor of the workers sufficient profit to be able to live comfortably, even richly, while at the same time increasing my capital - and all that without having to work myself. Of course I shall work too, but my work will be of an altogether different kind and I will be remunerated at a much higher rate than the workers. It will not be the work of production but that of administration and exploitation.

But isn't administrative work also productive work? No doubt it is, for lacking a good and an intelligent administration, manual labor will not produce anything or it will produce very little and very badly. But from the point of view of justice and the needs of production itself, it is not at all necessary that this work should be monopolized in my hands, nor, above all, that I should be compensated at a rate so much higher than manual labor. The co-operative associations already have proven that workers are quite capable of administering industrial enterprises, that it can be done by workers elected from their midst and who receive the same wage. Therefore if I concentrate in my hands the administrative power, it is not because the interests of production demand it, but in order to serve my own ends, the ends of exploitation. As the absolute boss of my establishment I get for my labor ten or twenty times more than my workers get for theirs, and this is true despite the fact that my labor is incomparably less painful than theirs.

But the capitalist, the business owner, runs risks, they say, while the worker risks nothing. This is not true, because when seen from his side, all the disadvantages are on the part of the worker. The business owner can conduct his affairs poorly, he can be wiped out in a bad deal, or be a victim of a commercial crisis, or by an unforeseen catastrophe; in a word he can ruin himself. This is true. But does ruin mean from the bourgeois point of view to be reduced to the same level of misery as those who die of hunger, or to be forced among the ranks of the common laborers? This so rarely happens, that we might as well say never. Afterwards it is rare that the capitalist does not retain something, despite the appearance of ruin. Nowadays all bankruptcies are more or less fraudulent. But if absolutely nothing is saved, there are always family ties, and social relations, who, with help from the business skills learned which they pass to their children, permit them to get positions for themselves and their children in the higher ranks of labor, in management; to be a state functionary, to be an executive in a commercial or industrial business, to end up, although dependent, with an income superior to what they paid their former workers.

The risks of the worker are infinitely greater. After all, if the establishment in which he is employed goes bankrupt, he must go several days and sometimes several weeks without work, and for him it is more than ruin, it is death; because he eats everyday what he earns. The savings of workers are fairy tales invented by bourgeois economists to lull their weak sentiment of justice, the remorse that is awakened by chance in the bosom of their class. This ridiculous and hateful myth will never soothe the anguish of the worker. He knows the expense of satisfying the daily needs of his large family. If he had savings, he would not send his poor children, from the age of six, to wither away, to grow weak, to be murdered physically and morally in the factories, where they are forced to work night and day, a working day of twelve and fourteen hours.

If it happens sometimes that the worker makes a small savings, it is quickly consumed by the inevitable periods of unemployment which often cruelly interrupt his work, as well as by the unforeseen accidents and illnesses which befall his family. The accidents and illnesses that can overtake him constitute a risk that makes all the risks of the employer nothing in comparison: because for the worker debilitating illness can destroy his productive ability, his labor power. Over all, prolonged illness is the most terrible bankruptcy, a bankruptcy that means for him and his children, hunger and death.

I know full well that under these conditions that if I were a capitalist, who needs a hundred workers to fertilize my capital, that on employing these workers, all the advantages are for me, all the disadvantages for them. I propose nothing more nor less than to exploit them, and if you wish me to be sincere about it, and promise to guard me well, I will tell them:

"Look, my children, I have some capital which by itself cannot produce anything, because a dead thing cannot produce anything. I have nothing productive without labor. As it goes, I cannot benefit from consuming it unproductively, since having consumed it, I would be left with nothing. But thanks to the social and political institutions which rule over us and are all in my favor, in the existing economy my capital is supposed to be a producer as well: it earns me interest. From whom this interest must be taken - and it must be from someone, since in reality by itself it produces absolutely nothing - this does not concern you. It is enough for you to know that it renders interest. Alone this interest is insufficient to cover my expenses. I am not an ordinary man as you. I cannot be, nor do I want to be, content with little. I want to live, to inhabit a beautiful house, to eat and drink well, to ride in a carriage, to maintain a good appearance, in short, to have all the good things in life. I also want to give a good education to my children, to make them into gentlemen, and send them away to study, and afterwards, having become much more educated than you, they can dominate you one day as I dominate you today. And as education alone is not enough, I want to give them a grand inheritance, so that divided between them they will be left almost as rich as I. Consequently, besides all the good things in life I want to give myself, I also want to increase my capital. How will I achieve this goal? Armed with this capital I propose to exploit you, and I propose that you permit me to exploit you. You will work and I will collect and appropriate and sell for my own behalf the product of your labor, without giving you more than a portion which is absolutely necessary to keep you from dying of hunger today, so that at the end of tomorrow you will still work for me in the same conditions; and when you have been exhausted, I will throw you out, and replace you with others. Know it well, I will pay you a salary as small, and impose on you a working day as long, working conditions as severe, as despotic, as harsh as possible; not from wickedness - not from a motive of hatred towards you, nor an intent to do you harm - but from the love of wealth and to get rich quick; because the less I pay you and the more you work, the more I will gain."

This is what is said implicitly by every capitalist, every industrialist, every business owner, every employer who demands the labor power of the workers they hire.

But since supply and demand are equal, why do the workers accept the conditions laid down by the employer? If the capitalist stands in just as great a need of employing the workers as the one hundred workers do of being employed by him, does it not follow that both sides are in an equal position? Do not both meet at the market as two equal merchants - from the juridical point of view at least - one bringing a commodity called a daily wage, to be exchanged for the daily labor of the worker on the basis of so many hours per day; and the other bringing his own labor as his commodity to be exchanged for the wage offered by the capitalist? Since, in our supposition, the demand is for a hundred workers and the supply is likewise that of a hundred persons, it may seem that both sides are in an equal position.

Of course nothing of the kind is true. What is it that brings the capitalist to the market? It is the urge to get rich, to increase his capital, to gratify his ambitions and social vanities, to be able to indulge in all conceivable pleasures. And what brings the

worker to the market? Hunger, the necessity of eating today and tomorrow. Thus, while being equal from the point of juridical fiction, the capitalist and the worker are anything but equal from the point of view of the economic situation, which is the real situation. The capitalist is not threatened with hunger when he comes to the market; he knows very well that if he does not find today the workers for whom he is looking, he will still have enough to eat for quite a long time, owing to the capital of which he is the happy possessor. If the workers whom he meets in the market present demands which seem excessive to him, because, far from enabling him to increase his wealth and improve even more his economic position, those proposals and conditions might, I do not say equalize, but bring the economic position of the workers somewhat close to his own - what does he do in that case? He turns down those proposals and waits. After all, he was not impelled by an urgent necessity, but by a desire to improve his position, which, compared to that of the workers, is already quite comfortable, and so he can wait. And he will wait, for his business experience has taught him that the resistance of workers who, possessing neither capital, nor comfort, nor any savings to speak of, are pressed by a relentless necessity, by hunger, that this resistance cannot last very long, and that finally he will be able to find the hundred workers for whom he is looking - for they will be forced to accept the conditions which he finds it profitable to impose upon them. If they refuse, others will come who will be only too happy to accept such conditions. That is how things are done daily with the knowledge and in full view of everyone.

If, as a consequence of the particular circumstances that constantly influence the market, the branch of industry in which he planned at first to employ his capital does not offer all the advantages that he had hoped, then he will shift his capital elsewhere; thus the bourgeois capitalist is not tied by nature to any specific industry, but tends to invest (as it is called by the economists - exploit what we say) indifferently in all possible industries. Let's suppose, finally, that learning of some industrial incapacity or misfortune, he decides not to invest in any industry; well, he will buy stocks and annuities; and if the interest and dividends seem insufficient, then he will engage in some occupation, or shall we say, sell his labor for a time, but in conditions much more lucrative than he had offered to his own workers.

The capitalist then comes to the market in the capacity, if not of an absolutely free agent, at least that of an infinitely freer agent than the worker. What happens in the market is a meeting between a drive for lucre and starvation, between master and slave. Juridically they are both equal; but economically the worker is the serf of the capitalist, even before the market transaction has been concluded whereby the worker sells his person and his liberty for a given time. The worker is in the position of a serf because this terrible threat of starvation which daily hangs over his head and over his family, will force him to accept any conditions imposed by the gainful calculations of the capitalist, the industrialist, the employer.

And once the contract has been negotiated, the serfdom of the workers is doubly increased; or to put it better, before the contract has been negotiated, goaded by hunger, he is only potentially a serf; after it is negotiated he becomes a serf in fact. Because what merchandise has he sold to his employer? It is his labor, his personal services, the productive forces of his body, mind, and spirit that are found in him and are inseparable from his person - it is therefore himself. From then on, the employer will watch over him, either directly or by means of overseers; everyday during working hours and under controlled conditions, the employer will be the owner of his actions and movements. When he is told: "Do this," the worker is obligated to do it; or he is told: "Go there," he must go. Is this not what is called a serf?

M. Karl Marx, the illustrious leader of German Communism, justly observed in his magnificent work *Das Kapital*² that if the contract freely entered into by the vendors of money - in the form of wages - and the vendors of their own labor - that is, between the employer and the workers - were concluded not for a definite and limited term only, but for one's whole life, it would constitute real slavery. Concluded for a term only and reserving to the worker the right to quit his employer, this contract constitutes a sort of voluntary and transitory serfdom. Yes, transitory and voluntary from the juridical point of view, but nowise from the point of view of economic possibility. The worker always has the right to leave his employer, but has he the means to do so? And if he does quit him, is it in order to lead a free existence, in which he will have no master but himself? No, he does it in order to sell himself to another employer. He is driven to it by the same hunger which forced him to sell himself to the first employer. Thus the worker's liberty, so much exalted by the economists, jurists, and bourgeois republicans, is only a theoretical freedom, lacking any means for its possible realization, and consequently it is only a fictitious liberty, an utter falsehood. The truth is that the whole life of the worker is simply a continuous and dismaying succession of terms of serfdom - voluntary from the juridical point of view but compulsory in the economic sense - broken up by momentarily brief interludes of freedom accompanied by starvation; in other words, it is real slavery.

This slavery manifests itself daily in all kinds of ways. Apart from the vexations and oppressive conditions of the contract which turn the worker into a subordinate, a passive and obedient servant, and the employer into a nearly absolute master - apart from all that, it is well known that there is hardly an industrial enterprise wherein the owner, impelled on the one hand by the two-fold instinct of an unappeasable lust for profits and absolute power, and on the other hand, profiting by the economic dependence of the worker, does not set aside the terms stipulated in the contract and wring some additional concessions in his own favor. Now he will demand more hours of work, that is, over and above those stipulated in the contract; now he will cut down wages on some pretext; now he will impose arbitrary fines, or he will treat the workers harshly, rudely, and insolently.

But, one may say, in that case the worker can quit. Easier said than done. At times the worker receives part of his wages in advance, or his wife or children may be sick, or perhaps his work is poorly paid throughout this particular industry. Other employers may be paying even less than his own employer, and after quitting this job he may not even be able to find another one. And to remain without a job spells death for him and his family. In addition, there is an understanding among all employers, and all of them resemble one another. All are almost equally irritating, unjust, and harsh.

Is this calumny? No, it is in the nature of things, and in the logical necessity of the relationship existing between the employers and their workers.

NOTES:

1. Not having to hand the works mentioned, I took these quotes from *la Histoire de la Revolution de 1848*, by Louis Blanc. Mr. Blanc continues with these words: "We have been well alerted. Now we know, without room for doubt, that according to all the doctrines of the old political economy, wages cannot have any other basis than the regulation between supply and demand, although the result is that the remuneration of labor is reduced to what is strictly necessary to not perish by starvation. Very well, and let us do no more than repeat the words inadvertently spoken in sincerity by Adam Smith, the head of this school: It is small consolation for individuals who have no other means for existence than their labor." (Bakunin)

2. *Das Kapital, Kritik der politischen Oekonomie*, by Karl Marx; Erster Band. This work will need to be translated into French, because nothing, that I know of, contains an analysis so profound, so luminous, so scientific, so decisive, and if I can express

it thus, so merciless an expose of the formation of bourgeois capital and the systematic and cruel exploitation that capital continues exercising over the work of the proletariat. The only defect of this work... positivist in direction, based on a profound study of economic works, without admitting any logic other than the logic of the facts - the only defect, say, is that it has been written, in part, but only in part, in a style excessively metaphysical and abstract... which makes it difficult to explain and nearly unapproachable for the majority of workers, and it is principally the workers who must read it nevertheless. The bourgeois will never read it or, if they read it, they will never want to comprehend it, and if they comprehend it they will never say anything about it; this work being nothing other than a sentence of death, scientifically motivated and irrevocably pronounced, not against them as individuals, but against their class. (Bakunin)

Equal Opportunity in Education

by Mikhail Bakunin

From *Egalite*, Geneva, July 31, 1869.

The first topic for consideration today is this: will it be feasible for the working masses to know complete emancipation as long as the education available to those masses continues to be inferior to that bestowed upon the bourgeois, or, in more general terms, as long as there exists any class, be it numerous or otherwise, which, by virtue of birth, is entitled to a superior education and a more complete instruction? Does not the question answer itself? Is it not self-evident that of any two persons endowed by nature with roughly equivalent intelligence, one will have the edge - the one whose mind will have been broadened by learning

and who, having the better grasped the inter-relationships of natural and social phenomena (what we might term the laws of nature and of society) will the more readily and more fully grasp the nature of his surroundings? And that this one will feel, let us say, a greater liberty and, in practical terms, show a greater aptitude and capability than his fellow? It is natural that he who knows more will dominate him who knows less. And were this disparity of education and education and learning the only one to exist between two classes, would not all the others swiftly follow until the world of men itself in its present circumstances, that is, until it was again divided into a mass of slaves and a tiny number of rulers, the former labouring away as they do today, to the advantage of the latter?

Now we see why the bourgeois socialists demand only a little education for the people, a soupcon more than they currently receive; whereas we socialist democrats demand, on the people's behalf, complete and integral education, an education as full as the power of intellect today permits. So that, henceforth, there may not be any class over the workers by virtue of superior education and therefore able to dominate and exploit them. The bourgeois socialists want to see the retention of the class system each class, they contend, fulfilling a specific social function; one specialising, say, in learning, and the other in manual labour. We, on the other hand, seek the final and the utter abolition of classes; we seek a unification of society and equality of social and economic provision for every individual on this earth. The bourgeois socialists, whilst retaining the historic bases of the society of today, would like to see them become less stark, less harsh and more prettified. Whereas we should like to see their destruction. From which it follows that there can be no truce or compromise, let alone any coalition between the bourgeois socialists and us socialist democrats. But, I have heard it said and this is the argument most frequently raised against us and an argument which the dogmatists of every shade regard as irrefutable - it is impossible that the whole of mankind should devote itself to learning, for we should all die of starvation. Consequently while some study others must labour so that they can produce what we need to live - not just producing for their own needs, but also for those men who devote themselves exclusively to intellectual pursuits; aside from expanding the horizons of human knowledge, the discoveries of these intellectuals improve the condition of all human beings, without exception, when applied to industry, agriculture and, generally, to political and social life; agreed? And do not their artistic creations enhance the lives of every one of us?

No, not at all. And the greatest reproach which we can level against science and the arts is precisely that they do not distribute their favours and do not exercise their influence, except upon a tiny fragment of society, to the exclusion and, thus, to the detriment of the vast majority. Today one might say of the advances of science and of the arts, just what has already and so properly been said of the prodigious progress of industry, trade, credit, and, in a word, of the wealth of society in the most civilised countries of the modern world. That wealth is quite exclusive, and the tendency is for it to become more so each day, as it becomes concentrated into an ever shrinking number of hands, shunning the lower echelons of the middle class and the petite bourgeoisie, depressing them into the proletariat, so that the growth of this wealth is the direct cause behind the growing misery of the labouring masses. Thus the outcome is that the gulf which yawns between the privileged, contented minority and millions of workers who earn their keep by the strength of their arm yawns ever wider and that the happier the contented - who -exploit the people's labour become the more unhappy the workers become. One has only to look at the fabulous opulence of the aristocratic, financier, commercial and industrial clique in England and compare it with the miserable condition of the workers of the same country; one has only to re-read the so naive and heartrending letter lately penned by an intelligent and upright goldsmith of London, one Walter Dugan, who has just voluntarily taken poison along with his wife and their six children, simply as a means of escape from the degradation's of poverty and the torments of hunger (1) - and one will find oneself obliged to concede that the much vaunted civilisation means, in material terms, to the people, only oppression and ruination. And the same holds true for the modern advances of science and the arts. Huge strides, indeed, it is true But the greater the advances, the more they foster intellectual servitude and thus, in material terms, foster misery and inferiority as the lot of the people; for these advances merely widen the gulf which already separates the people's level of understanding from the levels of the privileged classes. From the point of view of natural capacity, the intelligence of the former is, today, obviously less stunted, less exercised, less sophisticated and less corrupted by the need to defend unjust interests, and is, consequently, naturally of greater potency than the brain power of the bourgeoisie: but, then again, the brain power of the bourgeois does have at its disposal the complete arsenal of science filled with weapons that are indeed formidable. It is very often the case that a highly intelligent worker is obliged to hold his tongue when confronted by a learned fool who defeats him, not by dint of intellect (of which he has none) but by dint of his education, an education denied the workingman but granted the fool because, while the fool was able to develop his foolishness scientifically in schools, the working man's labours were clothing, housing, feeding him and supplying his every need, his teachers and his books, everything necessary to his education.

Even within the bourgeois class, as we know only too well, the degree of learning imparted to each individual is not the same. There, too, there is a scale which is determined, not by the potential of the individual but by the amount of wealth of the social stratum to which he belongs by birth; for example, the instruction made available to the children of the lower petite bourgeoisie, whilst itself scarcely superior to that which workers manage to obtain for themselves, is next to nothing by comparison with the education that society makes readily available to the upper and middle bourgeoisie. What, then, do we find? The petite bourgeoisie, whose only attachment to the middle class is through a ridiculous vanity on the one hand, and its dependence upon the big capitalists on the other, finds itself most often in circumstances even more miserable and even more humiliating than those which afflict the proletariat. So when we talk of privileged classes, we never have in mind this poor petite bourgeoisie which, if it did but have a little more spirit and gumption, would not delay in joining forces with us to combat the big and medium bourgeoisie who crush it today no less than they crush the proletariat. And should society's current economic trends continue in the same direction for a further ten years (which we do, however, regard as impossible) we may yet see the bulk of the medium bourgeoisie tumble first of all into the current circumstances of the petite bourgeoisie only to slip a little later into the proletariat - as a result, of course, of this inevitable concentration of ownership into an ever smaller number of hands - the ineluctable consequences of which would be to partition society once and for all into a tiny, overweeningly opulent, educated, ruling minority and a vast majority of impoverished, ignorant, enslaved proletarians.

There is one fact which should make an impression upon every person of conscience, upon all who have at heart a concern for human dignity and justice; that is, for the liberty of each individual amid and through a setting of equality for all. That is the fact that all of the intelligentsia, all of the great applications of science to the purpose of industry, trade and to the life of society in general have thus far profited no one, save the privileged classes and the power of the State, that timeless champion of all political and social iniquity. Never, not once, have they brought any benefit to the masses of the people. We need only list the machines and every workingman and honest advocate of the emancipation of labour would accept the justice of what we say. By what power do the privileged classes maintain themselves today, with all their insolent smugness and iniquitous pleasures, in defiance of

the all too legitimate outrage felt by the masses of the people? Is it by some power inherent in their persons? No - it is solely through the power of the State, in whose apparatus today their offspring hold, always, every key position (and even every lower and middle range position) excepting that of soldier and worker. And in this day and age what is it that constitutes the principle underlying the power of the State? Why, it is science. Yes, science - Science of government, science of administration and financial science; the science of fleecing the flocks of the people without their bleating too loudly and, when they start to bleat, the science of urging silence, patience and obedience upon them by means of a scientifically organised force: the science of deceiving and dividing the masses of the people and keeping them allays in a salutary ignorance lest they ever become able, by helping one another and pooling their efforts, to conjure up a power capable of overturning States; and, above all, military science with all its tried and tested weaponry, these formidable instruments of destruction which 'work wonders' (2): and lastly, the science of genius which has conjured up steamships, railways and telegraphy which, by turning every government into a hundred armed, a thousand armed Briareos (3), giving it the power to be, act and arrest everywhere at once - has brought about the most formidable political centralisation the world has ever witnessed.

Who, then, will deny that, without exception, all of the advances made by science have thus far brought nothing, save a boosting of the wealth of the privileged classes and of the power of the State, to the detriment of the well-being and liberty of the masses of the people, of the proletariat? But, we will hear the objection, do not the masses of the people profit by this also? Are they not much more civilised in this society of ours than they were in the societies of bygone centuries?

We shall reply to that with an observation borrowed from the noted German socialist, Lassalle. In measuring the progress made by the working masses, in terms of their political and social emancipation, one should not compare their intellectual state in this century with what it may have been in centuries gone by. Instead, one ought to consider whether, by comparison with some given time, the gap which then existed between the working masses and the privileged classes having been noted, the masses have progressed to the same extent as these privileged classes. For, if the progress made by both has been roughly equivalent, the intellectual gap which separates the masses from the privileged in today's world will be the same as it ever was; but if the proletariat has progressed further and more rapidly than the privileged, then the gap must necessarily have narrowed; but if, on the other hand, the worker's rate of progress has been slower and, consequently, less than that of a representative of the ruling classes over the same period, then that gap will have grown. The gulf which separates them will have increased and the man of privilege grown more powerful and the worker's circumstances more abject, more slave like than at the date one chose as the point of departure. If the two of us set off from two different points at the same time and you have a lead of one hundred paces over me and you move at a rate of sixty paces per minute, and I at only thirty paces per minute, then after one hour the distance which separates us will not be just over one hundred paces, but just over one thousand nine hundred paces.

That example gives a roughly accurate notion of the respective advances made by the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Thus far the bourgeoisie has raced along the track of civilisation at a quicker rate than the proletariat, not because they are intellectually more powerful than the latter indeed one might properly argue the contrary case - but because the political and economic organisation of society has been such that, hitherto, the bourgeoisie alone have enjoyed access to learning and science has existed only for them, and the proletariat has found itself doomed to a forced ignorance, so that if the proletariat has, nevertheless, made progress (and there is no denying it has) then that progress was made not thanks to society, but rather in spite of it. To sum up. In society as presently constituted, the advances of science have been at the root of the relative ignorance of the proletariat, just as the progress of industry and commerce have been at the root of its relative impoverishment. Thus, intellectual progress and material progress have contributed in equal measure towards the exacerbation of the slavery of the proletariat. Meaning what? Meaning that we have a duty to reject and resist that bourgeois science, just as we have a duty to reject and resist bourgeois wealth. And reject and resist them in this sense - that in destroying the social order which turns it into the preserve of one or of several classes, we must lay claim to it as the common inheritance of all the world.

[*Egalite*, 31 July 1869]

TO THE MEMORY OF
J. W. (Chummy) FLEMING
WHO, FOR NEARLY SIXTY YEARS
UPHELD THE CAUSE OF FREEDOM
AT THE YARA BANK OPEN AIR FORUM
MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

-- K. J. Kenafick

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Liberty for all, and a natural respect for that liberty: such are the essential conditions of international solidarity.
--Bakunin

Foreword

In my book *Michael Bakunin and Karl Marx*, I stated in a footnote that I intended to reprint certain passages from Bakunin in a booklet to be entitled *Marxism, Anarchism and the State*. The present work is a fulfillment of that intention; but I have slightly altered the title, because on reflection, I felt that Bakunin was here treating of wider and deeper matters than merely the merits of one political philosophy as against another. He was treating of the whole question of man's freedom in relation to society, to the community.

This question is the supreme question of our generation. On its solution depends the fate of the human race; for if the answer to the question of man's freedom in relation to the community is to be the totalitarian answer that he has none, then indeed can the march of human progress be said to have come to its end. And that end, bearing in mind the circumstances of this atomic age can only be amidst war and universal destruction.

In many parts of his writings, Bakunin has given his views on the nature and possibilities of human freedom--which he sharply differentiated from egoism and self centred individualism. Apart from that reproduced on the first page of the extracts, perhaps the best definition he has given is that couched in the following words:

"We understand by liberty, on the one hand, the development, as complete as possible of all the natural faculties of each individual, and, on the other hand, his independence, not as regards natural and social laws but as regards all the laws imposed by other human wills, whether collective or separate.

"When we demand the liberty of the masses, we do not in the least claim to abolish any of the natural influences of any individual or of any group of individuals which exercise their action on them. What we want is the abolition of artificial, privileged, legal, official, influences." (*Michael Bakunin and Karl Marx*, p. 300)

With this view of liberty is linked Bakunin's view of authority, which he by no means equates with organisation and self-discipline, which, in themselves, he regarded as very desirable. What he meant by "authority", namely the *right* to command or to enforce obedience, was considered by him to be fundamentally of religious origin. The idea of an authoritarianism that it is our *duty* to obey authority, is derived, according to his theory from religious origins, even when it has later taken political forms. Hence the opposition to religion, which takes a prominent position in his writings, much more so than in those of the Marxians, and which sometimes is rather violently expressed.

There is also another reason for the criticism of religion and churches that is to be found so frequently in his writings, and that is the close connection between religion and the State which distinguishes the Hegelian philosophy, against which Bakunin had rebelled. It is pointed out by Gide and Rist: "The State, according to Hegel, is an aggression of the spirit realising itself in the conscience of the world, while nature is an expression of the same spirit without the conscience, an *alter ego*--a spirit in bondage. God moving in the world has made the State possible. Its foundation is in the might of reason realising itself in will. It is necessary to think of it not merely as a given State or a particular institution, but of its essence or idea as a real manifestation of God. Every State, of whatever kind it may be, partakes of this divine essence." (*A History of Economic Doctrines*, p. 435)

Now this close identification of the spirit of God and the spirit of the State is reason enough why Bakunin, as an enemy the State, should also have considered it necessary to attack religion. Thus, the term "God and the State" later applied by its editors to a fragment of his works, is quite fitting. The Marxians, on the other hand, as adherents of the State, and as champions of authority, found no such necessity for making a frontal attack on religion, and encountered accordingly much less of the animosity of religiously-minded people than was the fate of the Anarchists.

Opinions may differ in the Socialist movement itself as to the relative importance to be given to the discussion of the religious questions; but the matter is mentioned here only in order to explain Bakunin's attitude and to show that it had a logical development, whether or not it were the best tactic to pursue, and whether or not its fundamental assumptions were correct.

As will be indicated in more detail in the following biography, the extracts printed in this volume are taken mainly from those writings of Bakunin touching on his controversy with Marx and therefore belong to the years 1870-72; but the passages dealing with the nature and characteristics of the State in general are mostly taken from *Federalism, Socialism and Anti-Theologianism* written in 1867, and based, as the title indicates, on the above-mentioned close connection, to his mind, between the State and religion.

It is not only the question of the relation of Marxian doctrines to those of freedom and of the State, so much discussed in the following pages that gives them interest and importance, but also the light they throw on the system that now exists in Soviet Russia, and which calls itself "Socialist" and "democratic", where it is, in reality, neither the one nor the other, but essentially capitalistic and totalitarian or, as Bakunin expressed it in a passage to be quoted later "all work performed in the employ of the State". Bakunin showed in the early seventies of the nineteenth century that such a system *must* result if it is attempted to transform society on an authoritarian basis; the existence in the middle of the twentieth century of that portentous phenomenon, the Soviet Government, has proved him up to the hilt to be right. In the words of his friend and collaborator, James Guillaume, "How could one want an equalitarian and free society to issue from an authoritarian organisation? It is impossible."

Melbourne, 1950.

K. J. Kenafick

Life of Bakunin

Michael Alexandrovitch Bakunin was born on 30th May, 1814, in the Russian province of Tver. He was the eldest son of a retired diplomat, who was a member of the ancient Russian nobility. Young Michael passed his boyhood on the family estate, and gained there an insight into the peasant mentality which is reflected in his later writings.

At the age of fifteen, after a good home education under tutors, he was sent to St. Petersburg to study for and enter the Artillery School. After five years of military studies, he was posted as ensign to a regiment stationed in Poland; but the monotonous life of a remote garrison soon proved highly unpalatable to this very sociable and highspirited young aristocrat. He threw up his commission and the whole military career and adopted instead that of a student in Moscow.

The adolescence and young manhood of Bakunin were spent under the iron despotism of the Tsar Nicholas I, the most consistently reactionary that Russia had ever known and the most rigidly repressive till the dictatorship of Joseph Stalin. Under this regime every type of liberalism of even the mildest kind, whether in politics, literature, or religion, was ruthlessly crushed. In philosophy alone did there seem to be any chance for discussion, and those who would in Western countries have turned to politics devoted their attention in Russia to philosophy. Bakunin was one of these and in fact at this time his interest in politics appears to have been nil. His favourite philosophers were Fichte and Hegel; from the former he learned that freedom, liberty, independence were the highest expression of the moral law; from the latter, the dominating philosopher of the time, he gained a knowledge of the Dialectic, the theory that all life and history constitute a process of the reconciliation of opposites on a higher plane--or, as Hegel expressed it thesis, antithesis and synthesis. From this there naturally arose a theory of historic evolution.

Five years of Bakunin's life (1835-40) were spent in the study of philosophy, at Moscow, and then he went to Berlin to imbibe more knowledge of his subject at its fountainhead. The political and intellectual atmosphere of Germany, though reactionary compared to those of France and England, was almost progressive as compared with Russia and some of the younger adherents of Hegel began to develop Radical ideas from his doctrine of the Dialectic. Prominent among these was Ludwig Feuerbach, whose book *The Essence of Christianity* took a decidedly materialistic, in fact, atheistic attitude. It converted many young intellectuals to its viewpoint and among these were Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and Michael Bakunin. The latter's intellectual evolution had now begun--the evolution that was to turn him from an orthodox subject of the Tsar into a Materialist, a Revolutionary Socialist, and an Anarchist.

In 1842 he went to Dresden in Saxony and in October published in Arnold Ruge's *Deutsche Fahrbuecher* an article entitled "Reaction in Germany" which led to revolutionary conclusions and which ended with words that became celebrated: "Let us put our trust in the eternal spirit which destroys and annihilates only because it is the unsearchable and eternally creative source of all life. The desire for destruction is also a creative desire."

Leaving Saxony which had become too hot to hold him as a result of this article, Bakunin went in 1843 to Switzerland. Here he made the acquaintance of Wilhelm Weitling and his writings. This man was a self-educated German Communist, who preached revolution and Socialism in phrases foreshadowing the later Anarchism. He said for instance: "The perfect society has no government but only an administration, no laws but only obligations, no punishments but means of correction." These sentiments greatly impressed and influenced the liberty-loving Bakunin. But they caused the gaoling of Weitling and when the Tsarist Government heard of Bakunin's connection with him, the young man was summoned back to Russia. He refused to go and was outlawed. He went for a brief period to Brussels and then, early in 1844, to Paris.

Bakunin's sojourn in Paris was of vital importance in his intellectual development. He encountered here two men whose influence on his thought was very great. These men were Karl Marx and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. Bakunin had many discussions with Marx at this period, and though greatly impressed by the German thinker's real genius, scholarship, and revolutionary zeal and energy, was repelled by his arrogance, egotism, and jealousy. These faults were ones of which Bakunin himself was entirely free, and this temperamental difference alone would have made it difficult for these two great men to get along together, even if their opinions had not been dissimilar in many respects, and if outside influences had not deliberately poisoned their relationships at a later time.

But at this period of the early eighteen forties their differences had not yet matured and Bakunin no doubt learned a good deal from Marx of the doctrine of Historical Materialism which is so important an element in both these great Socialistic thinkers' work. From Proudhon he learned at this period even more than from Marx. The former can be considered as the father of modern Anarchism, for he utterly rejected the very concept of Authority, in both politics and religion. In his economic views, he advocated a scheme called Mutualism, in which the most important role was played by a national bank, based on the mutual confidence of all those who were engaged in production. Bakunin did not take up this idea far he was impressed rather by the Marxian economies and advocated a system of Collectivism, but he thoroughly appreciated the spirit of liberty that breathed through all Proudhon's

writings and talk, and he placed him in that respect above Marx, of whom he truly said that the spirit of liberty was lacking in him; he remained from head to foot an Authoritarian.

Towards the end of 1847, Bakunin was expelled from Paris for having delivered a speech advocating freedom for Poland which was so displeasing to the Tsarist Government that it put pressure on the French Government to take action against him. He spent a few months in Brussels, but the revolution of February, 1848, which overthrew King Louis Philippe and established the Second Republic allowed Bakunin to return to Paris and he took a prominent part in the political demonstrations of the day. But he was soon attracted by the rising revolutionary movements in Central Europe. In Prague he participated in a brief insurrection, and in May, 1849, in another in Dresden. This resulted in his arrest, and finally his extradition to Russia, which claimed him as a fugitive. He passed eight horrible years in solitary confinement and it was only the death of the implacable Nicholas I and the accession of the milder Alexander II that enabled his family to secure his release. He spent four more years under surveillance in Siberia, where he married. Finally, in 1861, he escaped on an American vessel going to Japan and at the end of the year reached London.

In London he worked for a time with Alexander Herzen, the Russian Liberal, in his publications addressed to the Russian people, went for a while to try to help a Polish insurrection from there, and then settled down in Italy. Here he encountered the religiously-minded Nationalism of Mazzini, a man whom he greatly respected personally (having met him in London), but whose ideas he heartily disliked. This led him to accentuate the anti-patriotic and anti-religious elements in his own ideas, which by this period of the middle eighteen-sixties had become practically those later called "Anarchism".

In 1867 he went to Geneva to attend the inaugural Congress of the League for Peace and Freedom, a bourgeois body of which he thought some use could be made for the purpose of Socialist propaganda. He soon found that this could not be done (his ideas as set out in an article entitled "Federalism, Socialism and Anti-theologism", were far too radical), and instead he concentrated on the First International, which had been founded, largely through the instrumentality of Marx, in 1864. On leaving the League for Peace and Freedom, Bakunin and his friends had formed the Alliance of Socialist Democracy and this body now applied to join the International. The application aroused the suspicions of Marx who felt a jealous possessiveness as regards the International and had a German-minded antipathy to anything coming from a Russian. The initial proposal was therefore turned down and the Alliance was only admitted in sections, and when as a separate body it had been disbanded. (July, 1869.)

In September of the same year, a Congress of the International was held at Basel. This Congress showed itself favourable to Bakunin's view that inheritance should be abolished and rejected Marx's views on this subject. This was the beginning of a breach between Marx and his followers on the one hand and Bakunin and his followers on the other. It was fundamentally a difference on the question as to the role of the State in the Socialist programme. The Marxian view was essentially that the State must be used to bring about and consolidate Socialism; the views of the Bakuninists (at this period beginning to be called "Anarchists") was that the State must be abolished, and that it could never under any circumstances be used to attain either Socialism or any form of social justice for the workers.

These differences spread rapidly throughout the International and were deepened and exacerbated in Switzerland (where Bakunin was now settled) by a Russian emigre named Utin, who by methods of character-assassination poisoned Marx's already jealous and vindictive mind still further against Bakunin. The latter rightly resented the campaign of calumny which was now launched against him but he was of a tolerant and generous disposition and for all his resentment against Marx's tactics (only too prophetic of later "Communist" methods) never failed to acknowledge Marx's greatness as Socialist and thinker. He even began at this time a Russian translation of Marx's *Capital*, a book he highly admired, and whose economic doctrines he enthusiastically supported.

In the early part of 1870, Bakunin was mainly occupied in trying to stir up the Russian people to insurrection. This activity was in collaboration with a fanatical young revolutionary named Sergei Nechayev. The latter had committed a political murder in Russia and deceived Bakunin into condoning this act. He also published a "Revolutionary Catechism" which has often been mistaken for a production of Bakunin's, and which preaches the most violent and amoral tactics against existing society. Internal evidence shows that it cannot be Bakunin's for he was not an advocate of such opinions; and when he finally became aware of Nechayev's unscrupulousness he broke with him. The fugitive was later extradited to Russia and died in jail. The whole episode did Bakunin considerable harm, giving him because of his association with Nechayev, a reputation for violence and amoralism which was quite undeserved.

The Franco-German war which broke out in July, 1870, led to the writing of Bakunin's most important works. He looked to Social Revolution on the part of peasants and workers both to overthrow the reactionary regime of Napoleon III and to repel the German invaders under the direction of Bismarck. With the purpose of stirring up such a movement he wrote *A Letter to a Frenchman*, and then in September after the fall of the Second Empire and the establishment of the Third Republic, went to Lyons to launch an Anarchist rising. Through lack of determination and support by the workers' leaders themselves, despite Bakunin's demand for energetic action, the movement failed after an initial and brief success, and he fled to Marseilles, and thence back to Locarno, whence he had come to Lyons.

This fiasco deeply embittered and depressed Bakunin. He had lost all faith in the bourgeoisie since their turning on the workers in the revolutions of 1848, but now even the workers had shown themselves supine, and he became very pessimistic about their future. Arising out of these events he now wrote his greatest work, *The Knouto-Germanic Empire and the Social Revolution*. The title implied an alliance between the knout of the Russian Tsar and the new German Empire of Bismarck and Wilhelm I to crush the social revolution. It became a very voluminous work, treating in an extremely discursive way all manner of subjects, political, historical, economic, religious, philosophical, metaphysical, ethical and even astronomical, for as an Appendix to it Bakunin gave an exposition of the ideas of the System of Nature which he held and which was a complete and consistent Materialism. The piece known as "God and the State" is merely a fragment of this greater work, which is indeed Bakunin's "Magnum opus", his testament, as he called it. He worked at it intermittently from the close of 1870 to the close of 1872 and even then never succeeded in finishing it. (Sections of this work, written in November and December, 1872, have been quoted at length in the text)

The Paris Commune of March-May, 1871, interested him greatly though he no longer had any illusions about a workers' victory in any near future. He considered however that the events of the Commune gave a practical justification of his theories as against those of the Marxians, and a study of that historic episode would seem to justify his contention. In this same year, 1871, he had a controversy with Mazzini who had attacked both the International and the Commune, the former as being anti-nationalist and the latter as being atheistic and therefore both being abhorrent to Mazzini's religious nationalism. Bakunin respectfully but trenchantly replied in a pamphlet called *The Political Theology of Mazzini* which had a wide circulation in Italy and a great effect on the

Italian working class, which largely became imbued with Anarchist ideas. In Spain also, Bakunin's ideas bore fruit and to a lesser extent in France.

In 1872 he was occupied with the coming Congress of the International at the Hague. This meeting, which was held in September, was "packed" by the Marxists in a manner which later "Communist" tactics have made only too familiar. The equally familiar tactics of character-assassination were also resorted to by Marx, to his everlasting discredit, and Bakunin and his closest friend and collaborator, James Guillaume, were expelled from the International, the headquarters of which were at the same time shifted to New York to prevent it from falling into the hands of the anti-Marxists, who constituted a real majority in the International. That organisation soon withered and died in its alien home; but the Anarchists set up a new International in Switzerland and this lasted a few years more, surviving Bakunin himself.

It was based on Bakunin's idea of the Workers' International being a loose association of fully autonomous, national groups, devoted only to the economic struggle, in contradistinction to Marx's attempt to convert it into a highly centralised and rigidly controlled instrument of political manoeuvres--in fact what Lenin afterwards made of the Third International.

In order to ventilate his grievances and to explain his attitude to Marx and Marxism, Bakunin wrote a lengthy letter to the Brussels newspaper *Liberte*, and large extracts from this letter have been printed in the following pages.

In 1873, Bakunin formally withdrew from political activities. His health had been permanently injured by the long years of solitary confinement in Russian prisons and, though he was a man of great size, physical strength and energy, he was now old before his time.

He came out of his retirement, however, for the last time, in May, 1874, to lead an insurrection in the Italian province of Bologna; but this was a complete fiasco. It had been meant as a political demonstration and this was in accordance with Bakunin's view that such actions should be used as a means of awakening the people's interest. He had had no faith whatever in the use of political action (in the sense of voting at Parliamentary elections and referenda) ever since the abortive revolutions of 1848 with their aftermath of betrayal of the workers and of democracy itself by the bourgeoisie. He agreed with Proudhon's dictum (born of the same events) that universal suffrage was counter-revolution.

His doctrine, however, had nothing in common with the Nihilistic tactics of bomb outrages and assassinations which, after his death, were adopted by some Anarchists and tended to discredit the movement. He believed in mass organisations, in solidarity, and to him Individualism was a bourgeois ideology--a mere excuse for egoism. True liberty could only be achieved in and through Society.

Bakunin was in other words a Socialist, or as he often called himself, a Collectivist, but his Socialism was of the Libertarian school and expressively rejected authority and, above all, the State. In this respect he followed the doctrine of Proudhon, not of Marx. His system in fact consists of Proudhonian politics and Marxian economics.

Bakunin died at Berne on 1st July, 1876, and was buried in the cemetery there. Exactly seventy years after his death, on the 1st July, 1946, a gathering of international Anarchists stood by his graveside to pay homage to his memory.

The message which, above all, Bakunin tried to preach was that only the workers could free the workers; in other words, he desired to stimulate the self-activity of the working-class. He was never tired of quoting the celebrated slogan of the First International: "The emancipation of the toilers must be the work of the toilers themselves," and he expressly excluded from the concept of "toilers" those ex-workers who, having gained the leadership of a working-class movement, endeavour to make themselves masters of it and lead it where they are determined that it shall go. To Bakunin that was not emancipation, it was merely a change of masters. But he wanted the triumph of Humanity--a concept he had borrowed from the great philosopher of Positivism, Auguste Comte--a full human development of all men in conditions of liberty and equality.

To him this could not be achieved by the methods envisaged by Marx and, in the pages that follow, he has given a picture of what he thought the Marxian State would be like. The startling similarity of this picture to that of present-day Soviet Russia is due to the fact that Lenin, the founder of the regime, himself a product of the despotic Tsarist regime, laid great stress on the authoritarian aspects of Marxism as opposed to the more democratic elements of Anarchism. Bakunin had assumed that, in practice, the authoritarian elements in Marxism when it attained power would predominate, and this turned out to be correct.

It is obvious of course that Marxism and Bakuninism despite these differences have much in common and Bakunin himself has not failed to point this out in the pages that follow. Both systems were founded on the idea of Historical Materialism, both accepted the class struggle, both were Socialist in the sense of being opposed to private property in the means of production. They differed in that Bakuninism refused to accept the State under any circumstances whatever, that it rejected Party politics or Parliamentary action, and that it was founded on the principle of liberty as against that of authority: and indeed, it is this spirit of liberty (not Individualism) that distinguishes Bakunin, and in the light of which his criticisms of Marx and Marxism must be read. He had the true instinct that no man can be really emancipated except by himself.

Up to the present, however, the emancipation of the workers has nowhere been achieved, either by Bakunin's methods nor by Marx's (and certainly not in Soviet Russia); but to-day the more militant elements in the Left-wing and anti-Stalinist Socialist movements are beginning to give Bakunin's teachings more serious consideration than Marxians had ever done before; and some of them are commencing to feel that after all there may be something in what he said. If, therefore, the Socialist movement, in its more militant and revolutionary aspects, continues to exist throughout the world, it is possible that the political theories of Marx may give way to those of Bakunin, and that in the end he will prevail as the inspiring genius of militant and democratic Socialism.

Chapter I

Introductory

I am a passionate seeker after Truth and a not less passionate enemy of the malignant fictions used by the "Party of Order", the official representatives of all turpitudes, religious, metaphysical, political, judicial, economic, and social, present and past, to brutalise and enslave the world; I am a fanatical lover of Liberty; considering it as the only medium in which can develop intelligence, dignity, and the happiness of man; not official "Liberty", licensed, measured and regulated by the State, a falsehood representing the privileges of a few resting on the slavery of everybody else; not the individual liberty, selfish, mean, and fictitious advanced by the school of Rousseau and all other schools of bourgeois Liberalism, which considers the rights of the individual as limited by the rights of the State, and therefore necessarily results in the reduction of the rights of the individual to zero.

No, I mean the only liberty which is truly worthy of the name, the liberty which consists in the full development of all the material, intellectual and moral powers which are to be found as faculties latent in everybody, the liberty which recognises no other restrictions than those which are traced for us by the laws of our own nature; so that properly speaking there are no restrictions, since these laws are not imposed on us by some outside legislator, beside us or above us; they are immanent in us, inherent, constituting the very basis of our being, material as well as intellectual and moral; instead, therefore, of finding them a limit, we must consider them as the real conditions and effective reason for our liberty.

I mean that liberty of each individual which, far from halting as at a boundary before the liberty of others, finds there its confirmation and its extension to infinity; the illimitable liberty of each through the liberty of all, liberty by solidarity, liberty in equality; liberty triumphing over brute force and the principle of authority which was never anything but the idealised expression of that force, liberty which, after having overthrown all heavenly and earthly idols, will found and organise a new world, that of human solidarity, on the ruins of all Churches and all States.

I am a convinced upholder of economic and social equality, because I know that, without that equality, liberty, justice, human dignity, morality, and the well-being of individuals as well as the prosperity of nations will never be anything else than so many lies. But as upholder in all circumstances of liberty, that first condition of humanity, I think that liberty must establish itself in the world by the spontaneous organisation of labour and of collective ownership by productive associations freely organised and federalised in districts, and by the equally spontaneous federation of districts, but not by the supreme and tutelary action of the State.

There is the point which principally divides the Revolutionary Socialists or Collectivists from the Authoritarian Communists, who are upholders of the absolute initiative of the State. Their goal is the same; each party desires equally the creation of a new social order founded only on the organisation of collective labour, inevitably imposed on each and everyone by the very force of things, equal economic conditions for all, and the collective appropriation of the instruments of labour. Only the Communists imagine that they will be able to get there by the development and organisation of the political power of the working-classes, and principally of the proletariat of the towns, by the help of the bourgeois Radicalism, whilst the Revolutionary Socialists, enemies of all equivocal combinations and alliances, think on the contrary that they cannot reach this goal except by the development and organisation, not of the political but of the social and consequently anti-political power of the working masses of town and country alike, including all favourably disposed persons of the upper classes, who, breaking completely with their past, would be willing to join them and fully accept their programme.

Hence, two different methods. The Communists believe they must organise the workers' forces to take possession of the political power of the State. The Revolutionary Socialists organise with a view to the destruction, or if you prefer a politer word, the liquidation of the State. The Communists are the upholders of the principle and practice of, authority, the Revolutionary Socialists have confidence only in liberty. Both equally supporters of that science which must kill superstition and replace faith, the former would wish to impose it; the latter will exert themselves to propagate it so that groups of human beings, convinced, will organise themselves and will federate spontaneously, freely, from below upwards, by their own movement and conformably to their real interests, but never after a plan traced in advance and imposed on the "ignorant masses" by some superior intellects.

The Revolutionary Socialists think that there is much more practical sense and spirit in the instinctive aspirations and in the real needs of the masses of the people than in the profound intellect of all these learned men and tutors of humanity who, after so many efforts have failed to make it happy, still presume to add their efforts. The Revolutionary Socialists think, on the contrary, that the human race has let itself long enough, too long, be governed, and that the source of its misfortunes does not lie in such or such form of government but in the very principle and fact of government, of whatever type it may be. It is, in fine, the contradiction already become historic, which exists between the Communism scientifically developed by the German school^[1] and accepted in part by the American and English Socialists on the one hand, and the Proudhonism largely developed and pushed to its last consequences, on the other hand, which is accepted by the proletariat of the Latin countries.

It has equally been accepted and will continue to be still more accepted by the essentially anti-political sentiment of the Slav peoples.

Chapter II

Marxist Ideology

The doctrinaire school of Socialists, or rather of German Authoritarian Communists, was founded a little before 1848, and has rendered, it must be recognised, eminent services to the cause of the proletariat not only in Germany, but in Europe. It is to them that belongs principally the great idea of an "International Workingmen's Association" and also the initiative for its first realisation. To-day,^[2] they are to be found at the head of the Social Democratic Labour Party in Germany, having as its organ the "Volksstaat" ["People's State"].

It is therefore a perfectly respectable school which does not prevent it from displaying a very bad disposition sometimes, and above all from taking for the bases of its theories, a principal^[3] which is profoundly true when one considers it in its true light, that is to say, from the relative point of view, but which when envisaged and set down in an absolute manner as the only foundation and first source of all other principles, as is done by this school, becomes completely false.

This principle, which constitutes besides the essential basis of scientific Socialism, was for the first time scientifically formulated and developed by Karl Marx, the principal leader of the German Communist school. It forms the dominating thought of the celebrated "Communist Manifesto" which an international Committee of French, English, Belgian and German Communists assembled in London issued in 1848 under the slogan: "Proletarians of all lands, unite" This manifesto, drafted as everyone knows, by Messrs. Marx and Engels, became the basis of all the further scientific works of the school and of the popular agitation later started by Ferdinand Lassalle^[4] in Germany.

This principle is the absolute opposite to that recognised by the Idealists of all schools. Whilst these latter derive all historical facts, including the development of material interests and of the different phases of the economic organisation of society, from the development of Ideas, the German Communists, on the contrary, want to see in all human history, in the most idealistic manifestations of the collective as well as the individual life of humanity, in all the intellectual, moral, religious, metaphysical, scientific, artistic, political, juridical, and social developments which have been produced in the past and continue to be produced in the present, nothing but the reflections or the necessary after-effects of the development of economic facts. Whilst the Idealists maintain that ideas dominate and produce facts, the Communists, in agreement besides with scientific Materialism say, on the contrary, that facts give birth to ideas and that these latter are never anything else but the ideal expression of²⁵

accomplished facts and that among all the facts, economic and material facts, the pre-eminent facts, constitute the essential basis, the principal foundation of which all the other facts, intellectual and moral, political and social, are nothing more than the inevitable derivatives.

We, who are Materialists and Determinists, just as much is Marx himself, we also recognise the inevitable linking of economic and political facts in history. We recognise, indeed, the necessity, the inevitable character of all events that happen, but we do not bow before them indifferently and above all we are very careful about praising them when, by their nature, they show themselves in flagrant opposition to the supreme end of history^[5] to the thoroughly human ideal that is to be found under more or less obvious forms, in the instincts, the aspirations of the people and under all the religious symbols of all epochs, because it is inherent in the human race, the most social of all the races of animals on earth. Thus this ideal, to-day better understood than ever, can be summed up in the words: *It is the triumph of humanity, it is the conquest and accomplishment of the full freedom and full development, material, intellectual and moral, of every individual, by the absolutely free and spontaneous organisation of economic and social solidarity as completely as possible between all human beings living on the earth.*

Everything in history that shows itself conformable to that end, from the human point of view--and we can have no other--is good; all that is contrary to it is bad. We know very well, in any case, that what we call good and bad are always, one and the other, the natural results of natural causes, and that consequently one is as inevitable as the other. But as in what is properly called Nature we recognise many necessities that we are little disposed to bless, for example the necessity of dying of hydrophobia when bitten by a mad dog,^[6] in the same way, in that immediate continuation of the life of Nature, called History, we encounter many necessities which we find much more worthy of opprobrium than of benediction and which we believe we should stigmatise with all the energy of which we are capable, in the interest of our social and individual morality, although we recognise that from the moment they have been accomplished, even the most detestable historic facts have that character of inevitability which is found in all the Phenomena of Nature as well as those of history.

To make my idea clearer, I shall illustrate it by some examples. When I study the respective social and political conditions in which the Romans and the Greeks came into contact towards the decline of Antiquity, I arrive at the conclusion that the conquest and destruction by the military and civic barbarism of the Romans, of the comparatively high standard of human liberty of Greece was a logical, natural, absolutely inevitable fact. But that does not prevent me at all from taking retrospectively and very firmly, the side of Greece against Rome in that struggle, and I find that the human race gained absolutely nothing by the triumph of the Romans.

In the same way, I consider as perfectly natural, logical, and consequently inevitable fact, that Christians should have destroyed with a holy fury all the libraries of the Pagans, all the treasures of Art, and of ancient philosophy and science.^[7] But it is absolutely impossible for me to grasp what advantages have resulted from it for our political and social development. I am even very much disposed to think that apart from that inevitable process of economic facts in which, if one were to believe Marx, there must be sought to the exclusion of all other considerations, the only cause of all the intellectual and moral facts which are produced in history--I say I am strongly disposed to think that this act of holy barbarity, or rather that long series of barbarous acts and crimes which the first Christians, divinely inspired, committed against the human spirit, was one of the principal causes of the intellectual and moral degradation and consequently also of the political and social enslavement which filled that long series of baneful centuries called the Middle Ages. Be sure of this, that if the first Christians had not destroyed the libraries, Museums, and Temples of antiquity, we should not have been condemned to-day to fight the mass of horrible and shameful absurdities, which still obstruct men's brains to such a degree as to make us doubt sometimes the possibility of a more human future.

Following on with the same order of protests against facts which have happened in history and of which consequently I myself recognise the inevitable character, I pause before the splendour of the Italian Republics and before the magnificent awakening of human genius in the epoch of the Renaissance. Then I see approaching the two evil geniuses, as ancient as history itself, the two boa-constrictors which up till now have devoured everything human and beautiful that history has produced. They are called the Church and the State, the *Papacy* and the *Empire*. Eternal evils and inseparable allies, I see them become reconciled, embrace each other and together devour and stifle and crush that unfortunate and too beautiful Italy, condemn her to three centuries of death. Well, again I find all that very natural, logical, inevitable, but nevertheless abominable, and I curse both Pope and Emperor at the same time.

Let us pass on to France. After a struggle which lasted a century Catholicism, supported by the State, finally triumphed there over Protestantism. Well, do I not still find in France to-day some politicians or historians of the fatalist school and who, calling themselves Revolutionaries, consider this victory of Catholicism--a bloody and inhuman victory if ever there was one--as a veritable triumph for the Revolution? Catholicism, they maintain, was then the State, democracy, whilst Protestantism represented the revolt of the aristocracy against the State and consequently against democracy. It is with sophisms like that--completely identical besides with the Marxian sophisms, which, also, consider the triumphs of the State as those of Social Democracy--it is with these absurdities, as disgusting as revolting, that the mind and moral sense of the masses is perverted, habituating them to consider their blood-thirsty exploiters, their age-long enemies, their tyrants, the masters and the servants of the State, as the organs, representatives, heroes, devoted servants of their emancipation.

It is a thousand times right to say that Protestantism then, not as Calvinist theology, but as an energetic and armed protest, represented revolt, liberty, humanity, the destruction of the State; whilst Catholicism was public order, authority, divine law, the salvation of the State by the Church and the Church by the State, the condemnation of human society to a boundless and endless slavery.

Whilst recognising the inevitability of the accomplished fact, I do not hesitate to say that the triumph of Catholicism in France in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was a great misfortune for the whole human race, and that the massacre of Saint Bartholomew, as well as the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, were facts as disastrous for France herself as were lately the defeat and massacre of the people of Paris in the Commune. I have actually heard very intelligent and very estimable Frenchmen explain this defeat of Protestantism in France by the essentially revolutionary nature of the French people. "Protestantism," they said, "was only a semi-revolution; we needed a complete revolution; it is for that reason that the French nation did not wish, and was not able to stop at the Reformation. It preferred to remain Catholic till the moment when it could proclaim Atheism; and it is because of that that it bore with such a perfect and Christian resignation both the horrors of Saint Bartholomew and those not less abominable of the executors of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes."

These estimable patriots do not seem to want to consider one thing. It is that a people, who under whatsoever pretext it may be, suffers tyranny, necessarily loses at length the salutary habit of revolt and even the very instinct of revolt. It loses the feeling for liberty, and once a people has lost all that, it necessarily becomes not only by its outer conditions, but in itself, in the very

essence of its being, a people of slaves. It was because Protestantism was defeated in France that the French people lost, or rather, never acquired, the custom of liberty. It is because this tradition and this custom are lacking in it that it has not to-day what we call *political consciousness*, and it is because it is lacking in this consciousness that all the revolutions it has made up to now have not been able to give it or secure it political liberty. With the exception of its great revolutionary days, which are its festival days, the French people remain to-day as yesterday, a people of slaves.

Chapter III

The State and Marxism

All work to be performed in the employ and pay of the State--such is the fundamental principle of Authoritarian Communism, of State Socialism. The State having become sole proprietor--at the end of a certain period of transition which will be necessary to let society pass without too great political and economic shocks from the present organisation of bourgeois privilege to the future organisation of the official equality of all--the State will be also the only Capitalist, banker, money-lender, organiser, director of all national labour and distributor of its products. Such is the ideal, the fundamental principle of modern Communism.

Enunciated for the first time by Babeuf,^[8] towards the close of the Great French Revolution, with all the array of antique civism and revolutionary violence, which constituted the character of the epoch, it was recast and reproduced in miniature, about forty-five years later by Louis Blanc^[9] in his tiny pamphlet on *The Organisation of Labour*, in which that estimable citizen, much less revolutionary, and much more indulgent towards bourgeois weaknesses than was Babeuf, tried to gild and sweeten the pill so that the bourgeois could swallow it without suspecting that they were taking a poison which would kill them. But the bourgeois were not deceived, and returning brutality for politeness, they expelled Louis Blanc from France. In spite of that, with a constancy which one must admire, he remained alone in faithfulness to his economic system and continued to believe that the whole future was contained in his little pamphlet on the organisation of Labour.

The Communist idea later passed into more serious hands. Karl Marx, the undisputed chief of the Socialist Party in Germany--a great intellect armed with a profound knowledge, whose entire life, one can say it without flattering, has been devoted exclusively to the greatest cause which exists to-day, the emancipation of labour and of the toilers--Karl Marx who is indisputably also, if not the only, at least one of the principal founders of the International Workingmen's Association, made the development of the Communist idea the object of a serious work. His great work, *Capital*, is not in the least a fantasy, an "a priori" conception, hatched out in a single day in the head of a young man more or less ignorant of economic conditions and of the actual system of production. It is founded on a very extensive, very detailed knowledge and a very profound analysis of this system and of its conditions. Karl Marx is a man of immense statistical and economic knowledge. His work on *Capital*, though unfortunately bristling with formulas and metaphysical subtleties which render it unapproachable for the great mass of readers, is in the highest degree a scientific or realist work: in the sense that it absolutely excludes any other logic than that of the facts.

Living for very nearly thirty years, almost exclusively among German workers, refugees like himself and surrounded by more or less intelligent friends and disciples belonging by birth and relationship to the bourgeois world, Marx naturally has managed to form a Communist school, or a sort of little Communist Church, composed of fervent adepts and spread all over Germany. This Church, restricted though it may be on the score of numbers, is skilfully organised, and thanks to its numerous connections with working-class organisations in all the principal places in Germany, it has already become a power.^[10] Karl Marx naturally enjoys an almost supreme authority in this Church, and to do him justice, it must be admitted that he knows how to govern this little army of fanatical adherents in such a way as always to enhance his prestige and power over the imagination of the workers of Germany.

Marx is not only a learned Socialist, he is also a very clever Politician and an ardent patriot. Like Bismarck, though by somewhat different means, and like many other of his compatriots, Socialists or not, he wants the establishment of a great Germanic State for the glory of the German people and for the happiness and the voluntary, or enforced civilization of the world.

The policy of Bismarck is that of the present; the policy of Marx, who considers himself at least as his successor, and his continuator, is that of the future. And when I say that Marx considers himself the continuator of Bismarck, I am far from calumniating Marx. If he did not consider himself as such, he would not have permitted Engels, the confidant of all his thoughts, to write that Bismarck serves the cause of Social Revolution. He serves it now in his own way; Marx will serve it later, in another manner. That is the sense in which he will be later, the continuator, as to-day he is the admirer of the policy of Bismarck.

Now let us examine the particular character of Marx's policy, let us ascertain the essential points on which it is to be separated from the Bismarckian policy. The principal point, and, one might say, the only one, is this: Marx is a democrat, an Authoritarian Socialist, and a Republican; Bismarck is an out and out Pomeranian, aristocratic, monarchical Junker. The difference is therefore very great, very serious, and both sides are sincere in this difference. On this point, there is no possible understanding or reconciliation possible between Bismarck and Marx. Even apart from the numerous irrevocable pledges that Marx throughout his life, has given to the cause of Socialist democracy, his very position and his ambitions give a positive guarantee on this issue. In a monarchy, however Liberal it might be, or even cannot be any place, any role for Marx, and so much the more so in the Prussian Germanic Empire founded by Bismarck, with a bugbear of an Emperor, militarist and bigoted, as chief and with all the barons and bureaucrats of Germany for guardians. Before he can arrive at power, Marx will have to sweep all that away.

Therefore he is forced to be Revolutionary. That is what separates Marx from Bismarck--the form and the conditions of Government. One is an out and out aristocrat and monarchist; and in a Conservative Republic like that of France under Thiers^[11], there the other is an out and out democrat and republican, and, into the bargain, a Socialist democrat and a Socialist republican.

Let us see now what unites them. *It is the out and out cult of the State*. I have no need to prove it in the case of Bismarck, the proofs are there. From head to foot he is a State's man and nothing but a State's man. But neither do I believe that I shall have need of too great efforts to prove that it is the same with Marx. He loves government to such a degree that he even wanted to institute one in the International Workingmen's Association; and he worships power so much that he wanted to impose and still means to-day to impose his dictatorship on us. It seems to me that that is sufficient to characterise his personal attitude. But his Socialist and political programme is a very faithful expression of it. The supreme objective of all his efforts, as is proclaimed to us by the fundamental statutes of his party in Germany, is the establishment of the great People's State (Volksstaat).

But whoever says State, necessarily says a particular limited State, doubtless comprising, if it is very large, many different peoples and countries, but excluding still more. For unless he is dreaming of the Universal State as did Napoleon and the Emperor Charles the Fifth. or as the Papacy dreamed of the Universal Church. Marx. in spite of all the international ambition²⁷

which devours him to-day, will have, when the hour of the realisation of his dreams has sounded for him--if it ever does sound--he will have to content himself with governing a single State and not several States at once. Consequently, who ever says State says, a State, and whoever says a State affirms by that the existence of several States, and whoever says *several States*, immediately says: competition, jealousy, truceless and endless war. The simplest logic as well as all history bear witness to it.

Any State, under pain of perishing and seeing itself devoured by neighbouring States, must tend towards complete power, and, having become powerful, it must embark on a career of conquest, so that it shall not be itself conquered; for two powers similar and at the same time foreign to each other could not co-exist without trying to destroy each other. Whoever says conquest, says conquered peoples, enslaved and in bondage, under whatever form or name it may be.

It is in the nature of the State to break the solidarity of the human race and, as it were, to deny humanity. The State cannot preserve itself as such in its integrity and in all its strength except it sets itself up as supreme and absolute be-all and end-all, at least for its own citizens, or to speak more frankly, for its own subjects, not being able to impose itself as such on the citizens of other States unconquered by it. From that there inevitably results a break with human, considered as universal, morality and with universal reason, by the birth of State morality and reasons of State. The principle of political or State morality is very simple. The State, being the supreme objective, everything that is favourable to the development of its power is good; all that is contrary to it, even if it were the most humane thing in the world, is bad. This morality is called *Patriotism*. The International is the negation of patriotism and consequently the negation of the State. If therefore Marx and his friends of the German Socialist Democratic Party should succeed in introducing the State principle into our programme, they would kill the International.

The State, for its own preservation, must necessarily be powerful as regards foreign affairs; but if it is so as regards foreign affairs, it will infallibly be so as regards home affairs. Every State, having to let itself be inspired and directed by some particular morality, conformable to the particular conditions of its existence, by a morality which is a restriction and consequently a negation of human and universal morality, must keep watch that all its subjects, in their thoughts and above all in their acts, are inspired also only by the principles of this patriotic or particular morality, and that they remain deaf to the teachings of pure or universally human morality. From that there results the necessity for a State censorship; too great liberty of thought and opinions being, as Marx considers, very reasonably too from his eminently political point of view, incompatible with that unanimity of adherence demanded by the security of the State. That that in reality is Marx's opinion is sufficiently proved by the attempts which he made to introduce censorship into the International, under plausible pretexts, and covering it with a mask.

But however vigilant this censorship may be, even if the State were to take into its own hands exclusively education and all the instruction of the people, as Mazzini wished to do, and as Marx wishes to do to-day the State can never be sure that prohibited and dangerous thoughts may not slip in and be smuggled somehow into the consciousness of the population that it governs. Forbidden fruit has such an attraction for men, and the demon of revolt, that eternal enemy of the State, awakens so easily in their hearts when they are not sufficiently stupefied, that neither this education nor this instruction, nor even the censorship, sufficiently guarantee the tranquillity of the State. It must still have a police, devoted agents who watch over and direct, secretly and unobtrusively, the current of the peoples' opinions and passions. We have seen that Marx himself is so convinced of this necessity, that he believed he should fill with his secret agents all the regions of the International and above all, Italy, France, and Spain. Finally, however perfect may be, from the point of view of the preservation of the State, the organisation of education and instruction for the people, of censorship and the police, the State cannot be secure in its existence while it does not have, to defend it against its *enemies at home*, an armed force. The State is government from above downwards of an immense number of men, very different from the point of view of the degree of their culture, the nature of the countries or localities that they inhabit, the occupation they follow, the interests and the aspirations directing them--the State is the government of all these by some or other minority; this minority, even if it were a thousand times elected by universal suffrage and controlled in its acts by popular institutions, unless it were endowed with the omniscience, omnipresence and the omnipotence which the theologians attribute to God, it is impossible that it could know and foresee the needs, or satisfy with an even justice the most legitimate and pressing interests in the world. There will always be discontented people because there will always be some who are sacrificed.

Besides, the State, like the Church, by its very nature is a great sacrificer of living beings. It is an arbitrary being, in whose heart all the positive, living, individual, and local interests of the population meet, clash, destroy each other, become absorbed in that abstraction called the common interest, the *public good*, the *public safety*, and where all real wills cancel each other in that other abstraction which hears the name of the *will of the people*. It results from this, that this so-called will of the people is never anything else than the sacrifice and the negation of all the real wills of the population; just as this so-called public good is nothing else than the sacrifice of their interests. But so that this omnivorous abstraction could impose itself on millions of men, it must be represented and supported by some real being, by living force or other. Well, this being, this force, has always existed. In the Church it is called the clergy, and in the State--the ruling or governing class.

And, in fact, what do we find throughout history? The State has always been the patrimony of some privileged class or other; a priestly class, an aristocratic class, a bourgeois class, and finally a bureaucratic class, when, all the other classes having become exhausted, the State falls or rises, as you will, to the condition of a machine; but it is absolutely necessary for the salvation of the State that there should be some privileged class or other which is interested in its existence. And it is precisely the united interest of this privileged class which is called Patriotism.

By excluding the immense majority of the human race from its bosom, by casting it beyond the pale of the engagements and reciprocal duties of morality, justice and right, the State denies humanity, and with that big word, "Patriotism", imposes injustice and cruelty on all its subjects, as a supreme duty. It restrains, it mutilates, it kills humanity in them, so that, ceasing to be men, they are no longer anything but citizens--or rather, more correctly considered in relation to the historic succession of facts--so that they shall never raise themselves beyond the level of the citizen to the level of a man.

If we accept the fiction of a free State derived from a social contract, then discerning, just, prudent people ought not to have any longer any need of government or of State. Such a people can need only to live, leaving a free course to all their instincts: justice and public order will naturally and of their accord proceed from the life of the people, and the State, ceasing to be the providence, guide, educator, and regulator of society, renouncing all its repressive power, and failing to the subaltern role which Proudhon assigns it, will no longer anything else but a simple business office, a sort of central clearing house at the service of society.

Doubtless, such a political organisation, or rather, such a reduction of political action in favour of liberty in social life, would be a great benefit for society, but it would not at all please the devoted adherents of the State. They absolutely must have a State-Providence, a State directing social life, dispensing justice, and administering public order. That is to say, whether they admit it or not, and even when they call themselves Republicans, democrats, or even Socialists, they always must have a people who are more or less ignorant, minor, incapable, or to call things by their right names, riff-raff, to govern; in order, of course, that doing

violence to their own disinterestedness and modesty, they can keep the best places for themselves, in order always to have the opportunity to devote themselves to the common good, and that, strong in their virtuous devotion and their exclusive intelligence, privileged guardians of the human flock, whilst urging it on for its own good and leading it to security, they may also fleece it a little.

Every logical and sincere theory of the State is essentially founded on the principle of *authority*--that is to say on the eminently theological, metaphysical and political idea that the masses, *always* incapable of governing themselves, must submit at all times to the benevolent yoke of a wisdom and a justice, which in one way or another, is imposed on them from above. But imposed in the name of what and by whom? Authority recognised and respected as such by the masses can have only three possible sources--force, religion, or the action of a superior intelligence; and this supreme intelligence is always represented by minorities.

Slavery can Change its form and its name--its basis remains the same. This basis is expressed by the words: being a slave is being forced to work for other people--as being a master is to live on the labour of other people. In ancient times, as to-day in Asia and Africa, slaves were simply called slaves. In the Middle Ages, they took the name of "serfs", to-day they are called "wage-earners". The position of these latter is much more honourable and less hard than that of slaves, but they are none the less forced by hunger as well as by the political and social institutions, to maintain by very hard work the absolute or relative idleness of others. Consequently, they are slaves. And, in general, no State, either ancient or modern, has ever been able, or ever will be able to do without the forced labour of the masses, whether wage-earners or slaves, as a principal and absolutely necessary basis of the liberty and culture of the political class: the citizens.

Even the United States is no exception to this rule. Its marvellous prosperity and enviable progress are due in great part and above all to one important advantage--the great territorial wealth of North America. The immense quantity of uncultivated and fertile lands, together with a political liberty that exists nowhere else attracts every year hundreds of thousands of energetic, industrious and intelligent colonists. This wealth, at the same time keeps off pauperism and delays the moment when the social question will have to be put. A worker who does not find work or who is dissatisfied with the wages offered by the capitalist can always, if need be, emigrate to the far West to clear there some wild and unoccupied land ^[12]

This possibility always remaining open as a last resort to all American workers, naturally keeps wages at a level, and gives to every individual an independence, unknown in Europe. Such is the advantage, but here is the disadvantage. As cheapness of the products of industry is achieved in great part by cheapness of labour, the American manufacturers for most of the time are not in a condition to compete against the manufacturers of Europe--from which there results, for the industry of the Northern States, the necessity for a protectionist tariff. But that has a result, firstly to create a host of artificial industries and above all to oppress and ruin the non-manufacturing Southern States and make them want secession; finally to crowd together into cities like New York, Philadelphia, Boston and many others, proletarian working masses who, little by little, are beginning to find themselves already in a situation analogous to that of the workers in the great manufacturing States of Europe. And we see, in effect the social question already being posed in the Northern States, just as it was posed long before in our countries.

And there too, the self-government of the masses, in spite of all the display of the people's omnipotence, remains most of the time in a state of fiction. In reality, it is minorities which govern. The so-called Democratic Party, up to the time of the Civil War to emancipate the slaves, were the out and out partisans of slavery and of the ferocious oligarchy of the planters, demagogues without faith or conscience, capable of sacrificing everything to their greed and evil-minded ambition, and who, by their detestable influence and actions, exercised almost unhindered, for nearly fifty years continuously, have greatly contributed to deprave the political morality of North America.

The Republican Party, though really intelligent and generous, is still and always a minority, and whatever the sincerity of this party of liberation, however great and generous the principles it professes, do not let us hope that, in power, it will renounce this exclusive position of a governing minority to merge into the mass of the nation so that the self-government of the people shall finally become a reality. For that there will be necessary a revolution far more profound than all those which hitherto have shaken the Old and New Worlds.

In Switzerland, in spite of all the democratic revolutions that have taken place there, it is still always the class in comfortable circumstances, the bourgeoisie, that is to say, the class privileged by wealth, leisure, and education, which governs. The sovereignty of the people--a word which, anyway, we detest because in our eyes, all sovereignty is detestable--the government of the people by themselves is likewise a fiction. The people is sovereign in law, not in fact, for necessarily absorbed by their daily labour, which leaves them no leisure, and if not completely ignorant, at least very inferior in education to the bourgeoisie, they are forced to place in the hands of the latter their supposed sovereignty. The sole advantage which they get out of it in Switzerland, as in the United States, is that ambitious minorities, the political classes, cannot arrive at power otherwise than by paying court to the people, flattering their fleeting passions, which may sometimes be very bad, and most often deceiving them.

It is true that the most imperfect republic is a thousand times better than the most enlightened monarchy, for at least in the republic there are moments when, though always exploited, the people are not oppressed, while in monarchies they are never anything else. And then the democratic regime trains the masses little by little in public life, which the monarchy never does. But whilst giving the preference to the republic we are nevertheless forced to recognise and proclaim that whatever may be the form of government, whilst human society remains divided into different classes because of the hereditary inequality of occupations, wealth, education, and privileges, there will always be minority government and the inevitable exploitation of the majority by that minority.

The State is nothing else but this domination and exploitation regularised and systematised. We shall attempt to demonstrate it by examining the consequence of the government of the masses of the people by a minority, at first as intelligent and as devoted as you like, in an ideal State, founded on a free contract.

Suppose the government to be confined only to the best citizens. At first these citizens are privileged not by right, but by fact. They have been elected by the people because they are the most intelligent, clever, wise, and courageous and devoted. Taken from the mass of the citizens, who are regarded as all equal, they do not yet form a class apart, but a group of men privileged only by nature and for that very reason singled out for election by the people. Their number is necessarily very limited, for in all times and countries the number of men endowed with qualities so remarkable that they automatically command the unanimous respect of a nation is, as experience teaches us, very small. Therefore, under pain of making a bad choice, the people will be always forced to choose its rulers from amongst them.

Here, then, is society divided into two categories, if not yet to say two classes, of which one, composed of the immense majority of the citizens, submits freely to the government of its elected leaders, the other, formed of a small number of privileged

natures, recognised and accepted as such by the people, and charged by them to govern them. Dependent on popular election, they are at first distinguished from the mass of the citizens only by the very qualities which recommended them to their choice and are naturally, the most devoted and useful of all. They do not yet assume to themselves any privilege, any particular right, except that of exercising, insofar as the people wish it, the special functions with which they have been charged. For the rest, by their manner of life, by the conditions and means of their existence, they do not separate themselves in any way from all the others, so that a perfect equality continues to reign among all. Can this equality be long maintained? We claim that it cannot and nothing is easier to prove it.

Nothing is more dangerous for man's private morality than the habit of command. The best man, the most intelligent, disinterested, generous, pure, will infallibly and always be spoiled at this trade. Two sentiments inherent in power never fail to produce this demoralisation; they are: contempt for the masses and the overestimation of one's own merits.

"The masses," a man says to himself, "recognising their incapacity to govern on their own account, have elected me their chief. By that act they have publicly proclaimed their inferiority and my superiority. Among this crowd of men, recognising hardly any equals of myself, I am alone capable of directing public affairs. The people have need of me; they cannot do without my services, while I, on the contrary, can get along all right by myself: they, therefore, must obey me for their own security, and in condescending to command them, I am doing them a good turn."

Is not there something in all that to make a man lose his head and his heart as well, and become mad with pride? It is thus that power and the habit of command become for even the most intelligent and virtuous men, a source of aberration, both intellectual and moral.

But in the People's State of Marx, there will be, we are told, no privileged class at all. All will be equal, not only from the juridical and political point of view, but from the economic point of view. At least that is what is promised, though I doubt very much, considering the manner in which it is being tackled and the course it is desired to follow, whether that promise could ever be kept. There will therefore be no longer any privileged class, but there will be a government and, note this well, an extremely complex government, which will not content itself with governing and administering the masses politically, as all governments do to-day, but which will also administer them economically, concentrating in its own hands the production and the just division of wealth, the cultivation of land, the establishment and development of factories, the organisation and direction of commerce, finally the application of capital to production by the only banker, the State. All that will demand an immense knowledge and many "heads overflowing with brains"^[13] in this government. It will be the reign of *scientific intelligence*, the most aristocratic, despotic, arrogant and contemptuous of all regimes. There will be a new class, a new hierarchy of real and pretended scientists and scholars, and the world will be divided into a minority ruling in the name of knowledge and an immense ignorant majority.^[14] And then, woe betide the mass of ignorant ones!

Such a regime will not fail to arouse very considerable discontent in this mass and in order to keep it in check the enlightenment and liberating government of Marx will have need of a not less considerable armed force. For the government must be strong, says Engels, to maintain order among these millions of illiterates whose brutal uprising would be capable of destroying and overthrowing everything, even a government directed by heads overflowing with brains.

You can see quite well that behind all the democratic and socialistic phrases and promises of Marx's programme, there is to be found in his State all that constitutes the true despotic and brutal nature of all States, whatever may be the form of their government and that in the final reckoning, the People's State so strongly commended by Marx, and the aristocratic-monarchic State, maintained with as much cleverness as power by Bismarck, are completely identical by the nature of their objective at home as well as in foreign affairs. In foreign affairs it is the same deployment of military force, that is to say, conquest; and in home affairs it is the same employment of this armed force, the last argument of all threatened political powers against the masses, who, tired of believing, hoping, submitting and obeying always, rise in revolt.

Marx's Communist idea comes to light in all his writings; it is also manifest in the motions put forward by the General Council of the International Workingmen's Association, situated in London, at the Congress of Basel in 1869, as well as by the proposals which he had intended to present to the Congress which was to take place in September, 1870, but which had to be suspended because of the Franco-German War. As a member of the General Council in London and as corresponding Secretary for Germany, Marx enjoys in this Council, as is well known, a great and it must be admitted, legitimate influence, so that it can be taken for certain that of the motions put to the Congress by the Council, several are principally derived from the system and the collaboration of Marx. It was in this way that the English citizen Lucraft, a member of the General Council, put forward at the Congress of Basel the idea that all the land in a country should become the property of the State, and that the cultivation of this land should be directed and administered by State officials, "Which," he added, "will only be possible in a democratic and Socialist State, in which the people will have to watch carefully over the good administration of the national land by the State."

This cult of the State is, in general, the principal characteristic of German Socialism. Lassalle, the greatest Socialist agitator and the true founder of the practical Socialist movement in Germany was steeped in it. He saw no salvation for the workers except in the power of the State; of which the workers should possess themselves, according to him, by means of universal suffrage.

Chapter IV

Internationalism and the State

Let us consider the real, national policy of Marx himself. Like Bismarck, he is a German patriot. He desires the greatness and power of Germany as a State. No one anyway will count it a crime in him to love his country and his people; and since he is so profoundly convinced that the State is the condition *sine qua non* of the prosperity of the one and the emancipation of the other, it will be found natural that he should desire to see Germany organized into a very large and very powerful State, since weak and small States always run the risk of seeing themselves swallowed up. Consequently Marx as a clear-sighted and ardent patriot, must wish for the greatness and strength of Germany as a State.

But, on the other hand, Marx is a celebrated Socialist and, what is more, one of the principal initiators of the International. He does not content himself with working for the emancipation of the proletariat of Germany alone; he feels himself in honor bound, and he considers it as his duty, to work at the same time for the emancipation of the proletariat of all other countries; the result is that he finds himself in complete conflict with himself. As a German patriot, he wants the greatness and power, that is to say, the domination of Germany; but as a Socialist of the International he must wish for the emancipation of all the peoples of the world. How can this contradiction be resolved?

There is only one way, that is to proclaim, after he has persuaded himself of it, of course, that the greatness and power of Germany as a State, is a supreme condition of the emancipation of the whole world, that the national and political triumph of Germany, is the triumph of humanity, and that all that is contrary to the advent of this great new omnivorous power is the enemy of humanity. This conviction once established, it is not only permitted, but it is commanded by the most sacred of causes, to make the International, including all the Federations of other countries, serve as a very powerful, convenient, above all, popular means for the setting up of the great Pan-German State. And that is precisely what Marx tried to do, as much by the deliberations of the Conference he called at London in 1871 as by the resolutions voted by his German and French friends at the Hague Congress. If he did not succeed better, it is assuredly not for lack of very great efforts and much skill on his part, but probably because the fundamental idea which inspires him is false and its realization is impossible.

One cannot commit a greater mistake than to ask either of a thing or of an institution, or of a man more than they can give. By demanding more from them one demoralises, impedes, perverts and kills them. The International in a short time produced great results. It organised and it will organise every day in a more formidable manner still, the proletariat for the economic struggle. Is that a reason to hope that one can use it as an instrument for the political struggle? Marx, because he thought so, very nearly killed the International, by his criminal attempt at the Hague. It is the story of the goose with the golden eggs. At the summons to the economic struggle masses of workers of different countries hastened along to range themselves under the flag of the International, and Marx imagined that the masses would stay under it--what do I say?--that they would hasten along in still more formidable numbers, when he, a new Moses, had inscribed the maxims of his political decalogue on our flag in the official and binding programme of the International.

There his mistake lay. The masses, without distinction of degree of culture, religious beliefs, country and speech, had understood the language of the International when it spoke to them of their poverty, their sufferings and their slavery under the yoke of Capitalism and exploiting private ownership; they understood it when it demonstrated to them the necessity of uniting their efforts in a great solid, common struggle. But here they were being talked to about a very learned and above all very authoritarian political programme, which, in the name of their own salvation, was attempting, in that very International which was to organise their emancipation by their own efforts, to impose on them a dictatorial government, provisional, no doubt, but, meanwhile, completely arbitrary and directed by a head extraordinarily filled with brains.

Marx's programme is a complete fabric of political and economic institutions strongly centralised and very authoritarian, sanctioned, no doubt, like all despotic institutions in modern society, by universal suffrage, but subordinate nevertheless to a very *strong* government; to use the very words of Engels, the *alter ego* of Marx, the confidant of the legislator.

To what a degree of madness would not one have to be driven by ambition, or vanity, or both at once, to have been capable of conceiving the hope that one could retain the working masses of the different countries of Europe and America under the flag of the International on these conditions!

A universal State, government, dictatorship! The dream of Popes Gregory VII and Boniface VIII, of the Emperor Charles V, and of Napoleon, reproducing itself under new forms, but always with the same pretensions in the camp of Socialist Democracy! Can one imagine anything more burlesque, but also anything more revolting?

To maintain that one group of individuals, even the most intelligent and the best intentioned, are capable of becoming the thought, the soul, the guiding and unifying will of the revolutionary movement and of the economic organisation of the proletariat in all countries is such a heresy against common sense, and against the experience of history, that one asks oneself with astonishment how a man as intelligent as Marx could have conceived it.

The Pope had at least for an excuse the absolute truth which they claimed rested in their hands by the grace of the Holy Spirit and in which they were supposed to believe. Marx has not this excuse, and I shall, not insult him by thinking that he believes himself to have scientifically invented something which approaches absolute truth. But from the moment that the absolute does not exist, there cannot be any infallible dogma for the International, nor consequently any official political and economic theory, and our Congresses must never claim the role of General Church Councils, proclaiming obligatory principles for all adherents and believers. There exists only one law which is really obligatory for all members, individuals sections and federations in the International, of which this law constitutes the true and only basis. It is, in all its extension, in all its consequences and applications--the International solidarity of the toilers in all trades and in all countries in their economic struggle against the exploiters of labour. It is in the real organisation of this solidarity, by the spontaneous organisation of the working masses and by the absolutely free federation, powerful in proportion as it will be free, of the working masses of all languages and nations, and not in their unification by decrees and under the rod of any government whatever, that there resides the real and living unity of the International. That from this ever broader organisation of the militant solidarity of the proletariat against bourgeois exploitation there must issue, and in fact there does arise, the political struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie; who can doubt? The Marxians and ourselves are unanimous on this point. But immediately there presents itself the question which separates us so profoundly from the Marxians.

We think that the necessarily revolutionary policy of the proletariat must have for its immediate and only object the destruction of States. We do not understand that anyone could speak of international solidarity when they want to keep States--unless they are dreaming of the Universal State, that is to say, universal slavery like the great Emperors and Popes--the State by its very nature being a rupture of this solidarity and consequently a permanent cause of war. Neither do we understand how anybody could speak of the freedom of the proletariat or of the real deliverance of the masses in the State and by the State. State means domination, and all domination presupposes the subjection of the masses and consequently their exploitation to the profit of some minority or other.

We do not admit, even as a revolutionary transition, either National Conventions, or Constituent Assemblies, or so-called revolutionary dictatorships; because we are convinced that the revolutionary is only sincere, honest and real in the masses, and that when it is concentrated in the hands of some governing individuals, it naturally and inevitably becomes reaction.

The Marxians profess quite contrary ideas. As befits good Germans, they are worshipers of the power of the State, and necessarily also the prophets of political and social discipline, the champions of order established from above downwards, always in the name of universal suffrage and the sovereignty of the masses, to whom they reserve the happiness and honour of obeying chiefs, elected masters. The Marxians admit no other emancipation than that which they expect from their so-called People's States. They are so little the enemies of patriotism that their International, even, wears too often the colours of Pan-Germanism. Between the Marxian policy and the Bismarckian policy there no doubt exists a very appreciable difference, but between the Marxians and ourselves, there is an abyss. They are Governmentalists, we are out and out Anarchists.

Indeed, between these two tendencies no conciliation to-day is possible. Only the practical experience of social revolution, of great new historic experiences, the logic of events, can bring them sooner or later to a common solution; and strongly convinced of the rightness of our principle, we hope that then the Germans themselves--the workers of Germany and not their leaders--will finish by joining us in order to demolish those prisons of peoples, that are called States and to condemn politics, which indeed is nothing but the art of dominating and fleecing the masses.

At a pinch I can conceive that despots, crowned or uncrowned, could dream of the sceptre of the world; but what can be said of a friend of the proletariat, of a revolutionary who seriously claims that he desires the emancipation of the masses and who setting himself up as director and supreme arbiter of all the revolutionary movements which can burst forth in different countries, dares to dream of the subjection of the proletariat of all these countries to a single thought, hatched in his own brain.

I consider that Marx is a very serious revolutionary, if not always a very sincere one, and that he really wants to uplift the masses and I ask myself--Why it is that he does not perceive that the establishment of a universal dictatorship, whether collective or individual, of a dictatorship which would perform in some degree the task of chief engineer of the world revolution--ruling and directing the insurrectional movement of the masses in all countries as one guides a machine--that the establishment of such a dictatorship would suffice by itself alone to kill the revolution, or paralyse and pervert all the people's movements? What is the man, what is the group of individuals, however great may be their genius, who would dare to flatter themselves to be able to embrace and comprehend the infinite multitude of interests, of tendencies and actions, so diverse in each country, province, locality, trade, and of which the immense totality, united, but not made uniform, by one grand common aspiration and by some fundamental principles which have passed henceforth into the consciousness of the masses, will constitute the future social revolution?

And what is to be thought of an International Congress which in the so-called interests of this revolution, imposes on the proletariat of the whole civilised world a government invested with dictatorial power, with the inquisitorial and dictatorial rights of suspending regional federations, of proclaiming a ban against whole nations in the name of a so-called official principle, which is nothing else than Marx's own opinion, transformed by the vote of a fake majority into an absolute truth? What is to be thought of a Congress which, doubtless to render its folly still more patent, relegates to America this dictatorial governing body, after having composed it of men probably very honest, but obscure, sufficiently ignorant, and absolutely unknown to it. Our enemies the bourgeois would then be right when they laugh at our Congresses and when they claim that the International only fights old tyrannies in order to establish new ones, and that in order worthily to replace existing absurdities, it wishes to create another!

Chapter V

Social Revolution and the State

What Bismarck has done for the political and bourgeois world, Marx claims to do to-day^[15] for the Socialist world, among the proletariat of Europe; to replace French initiative by German initiative and domination; and as, according to him and his disciples, there is no German thought more advanced than his own, he believed the moment had come to have it triumph theoretically and practically in the International. Such was the only object of the Conference which he called, together in September 1871 in London. This Marxian thought is explicitly developed in the famous Manifesto of the refugee German Communists drafted and published in 1848. by Marx and Engels. It is the theory of the emancipation of the proletariat and of the organisation of labour by the State.

Its principal point is the conquest of political power by the working class. One can understand that men as indispensable as Marx and Engels should be the partisans of a programme which, consecrating and approving political power, opens the door to all ambitions. Since there will be political power there will necessarily be subjects, got up in Republican fashion, as citizens, it is true, but who will none the less be subjects, and who as such will be forced to obey--because without obedience, there is no power possible. It will be said in answer to this that they will obey not men but laws which they will have made themselves. To that I shall reply that everybody knows how much, in the countries which are freest and most democratic, but politically governed, the people make the laws, and what their obedience to these laws signifies. Whoever is not deliberately desirous of taking fictions for realities must recognise quite well that, even in such countries, the people really obey not laws which they make themselves, but laws which are made in their name, and that to obey these laws means nothing else to them than to submit to the arbitrary will of some guarding and governing minority or, what amounts to the same thing, to be freely slaves.

There is in this programme another expression which is profoundly antipathetic to us revolutionary Anarchists who frankly want the complete emancipation of the people; the expression to which I refer is the presentation of the proletariat, the whole society of toilers, as a "class" and not as a "mass". Do you know what that means? Neither more nor less than a new aristocracy, that of the workers of the factories and towns, to the exclusion of the millions who constitute the proletariat of the countryside and who in the anticipations of the Social Democrats of Germany will, in effect, become subjects of their great so-called People's State. "Class", "Power", "State", are three inseparable terms, of which. each necessary pre-supposes the two others and which all definitely are to be summed up by the words: *the political subjection and the economic exploitation of the masses*.

The Marxians think that just as in the 18th Century the bourgeoisie dethroned the nobility, to take its place and to absorb it slowly into its own body, sharing with it the domination and exploitation of the toilers in the towns as well as in the country, so the proletariat of the towns is called on to-day to dethrone the bourgeoisie, to absorb it and to share with it the domination and exploitation of the proletariat of the countryside; this last outcast of history, unless this latter later revolts and demolishes all classes, denominations, powers, in a word, all States.

To me, however, the flower of the proletariat does not mean, as it does to the Marxians, the upper layer, the most civilised and comfortably off in the working world, that layer of semi-bourgeois workers, which is precisely the class the Marxians want to use to constitute their *fourth governing class*, and which is really capable of forming one if things are not set to rights in the interests of the great mass of the proletariat; for with its relative comfort and semi-bourgeois position, this upper layer of workers is unfortunately only too deeply penetrated with all the political and social prejudices and all the narrow aspirations and pretensions of the bourgeois. It can be truly said that this upper layer is the least socialist, the most individualist in all the proletariat.

By the *flower of the proletariat*, I mean above all, that great mass, those millions of non-civilised, disinherited, wretched and illiterates whom Messrs. Engels and Marx mean to subject to the paternal regime of a *very strong government*, to employ an expression used by Engels in a letter to our friend Cafiero. Without doubt, this will be for their own salvation, as of course all governments. as is well known. have been established solely in the interests of the masses themselves.^[16] By the flower of³²

the proletariat I mean precisely that eternal "meat" for governments, that great *rabble of the people* ordinarily designated by Messrs. Marx and Engels by the phrase at once picturesque and contemptuous of "lumpen proletariat", the "riff raff", that rabble which, being very nearly unpolluted by all bourgeois civilization carries in its heart, in its aspirations, in all necessities and the miseries of its collective position, all the germs of the Socialism of the future, and which alone is powerful enough to-day to inaugurate the Social Revolution and bring it to triumph.

Though differing from us in this respect also, the Marxians do not reject our programme absolutely. They only reproach us with wanting to hasten, to outstrip, the slow march of history and to ignore the scientific law of successive evolutions. Having had the thoroughly German nerve to proclaim in their worlds consecrated to the philosophical analysis of the past that the bloody defeat of the insurgent peasants of Germany and the triumph of the despotic States in the sixteenth century constituted a great revolutionary progress, they to-day have the nerve to satisfy themselves with establishing a new despotism to the so-called profit of the town-workers and to the detriment of the toilers in the country.

To support his programme of the conquest of political power, Marx has a very special theory which is, moreover, only a logical consequence of his whole system. The political condition of each country, says he, is always the product and the faithful expression of its economic situation; to change the former it is only necessary to transform the latter. According to Marx, all the secret of historic evolution is there. He takes no account of other elements in history, such as the quite obvious reaction of political, juridical, and religious institutions on the economic situation. He says, "Poverty produces political slavery, the State," but he does not allow this expression to be turned around to say "Political slavery, the State, reproduces in its turn, and maintains poverty as a condition of its own existence; so that, in order to destroy poverty, it is necessary to destroy the State!" And, a strange thing in him who forbids his opponents to lay the blame on political slavery, the State, as an active cause of poverty, he commands his friends and disciples of the Social Democratic Party in Germany to consider the conquest of power and of political liberties as the preliminary condition absolutely necessary for economic emancipation.

Yet the sociologists of the school of Marx, men like Engels and Lassalle, object against us that the State is not at all the cause of the poverty of the people, of the degradation and servitude of the masses; but that the wretched condition of the masses, as well as the despotic power of the State are, on the contrary, both the one and the other, the effects of a more general cause, the products of an inevitable phase in the economic development of society, of a phase which, from the point of view of history, constitutes true progress, an immense step towards what *they* call the social revolution. To such a degree, in fact, that Lassalle did not hesitate loudly to proclaim that the defeat of the formidable revolt of the peasants in Germany in the sixteenth century--a deplorable defeat if ever there was one, from which dates the centuries-old slavery of the Germans--and the triumph of the despotic and centralised State which was the necessary consequence of it, constituted a real triumph for this revolution; because the peasants, say the Marxians, are the natural representatives of reaction, whilst the modern military and bureaucratic State--a product and inevitable accompaniment of the social revolution, which, starting from the second half of the sixteenth century commenced the slow, but always progressive trans--formation of the ancient feudal and land economy into the production of wealth, or, what comes to the same thing, into the exploitation of the labour of the people by capital--this State was an essential condition of this revolution.

One can understand how Engels, driven on by the same illogic, in a letter addressed to one of our friends, Carlo Cafiero, was able to say, without the least irony, but on the contrary, very seriously, that Bismarck as well as King Victor Emmanuel II had rendered immense services to the revolution, both of them having created political centralisation in their respective countries.

Likewise Marx completely ignores a most important element in the historic development of humanity, that is, the temperament and particular character of each race and each people, a temperament and character which are naturally themselves the product of a multitude of ethnographical, climatological, economic, as well as historic causes, but which, once produced, exercise, even apart from and independent of the economic conditions of each country, a considerable influence on its destinies, and even on the development of its economic forces. Among these elements, and these so to say natural traits, there is one whose action is completely decisive in the particular history of each people; it is the intensity of the instinct of revolt, and by the same token, of liberty, with which it is endowed or which it has conserved. This instinct is a fact which is completely primordial and animal; one finds it in different degrees in every living being, and the energy, the vital power of each is to be measured by its intensity. In man, besides the economic needs which urge him on, this instinct becomes the most powerful agent of all human emancipations. And as it is a matter of temperament, not of intellectual and moral culture, although ordinarily it evokes one and the other, it sometimes happens that civilised peoples possess it only in a feeble degree, whether it is that it has been exhausted during their previous development, or whether the very nature of their civilisation has depraved them, or whether, finally, they were originally less endowed with it than were others.

Such has been in all its past, such is still today the Germany of the nobles and the bourgeoisie. The German proletariat, a victim for centuries of one and the other, can it be made jointly responsible for the spirit of conquest which manifests itself to-day in the upper classes of this nation? In actual fact, undoubtedly, no. For a conquering people is necessarily a slave people, and the slaves are always the proletariat. Conquest is therefore completely opposed to their interests and liberty. But they are jointly responsible for it in spirit, and they will remain jointly responsible as long as they do not understand that this Pan-German State, this Republican and so-called People's State, which is promised them in a more or less near future, would be nothing else, if it could ever be realised, than a new form of very hard slavery for the proletariat.

Up to the present, at least, they do not seem to have understood it, and none of their chiefs, orators, or publicists, has given himself the trouble to explain it to them. They are all trying, on the contrary, to inveigle the proletariat along a path where they will meet with nothing but the animadversion of the world and their own enslavement; and, as long as, obeying the directions of these leaders, they pursue this frightful illusion of a People's State, certainly the proletariat will not have the initiative for social revolution. This Revolution will come to it from outside, probably from the Mediterranean countries, and then yielding to the universal contagion, the German proletariat will unloose its passions and will overthrow at one stroke the dominion of its tyrants and of its so-called emancipation.

The reasoning of Marx leads to absolutely opposite results. Taking into consideration nothing but the one economic question, he says to himself that the most advanced countries and consequently the most capable of making a social revolution are those in which modern Capitalist production has reached its highest degree of development. It is they that, to the exclusion of all others, are the civilised countries, the only ones called on to initiate and direct this revolution. This revolution will consist in the expropriation, whether by peaceful succession or by violence, of the present property-owners and capitalists and in the appropriation of all lands and all capital by the State, which in order to fulfill its great economic as well as political mission must necessarily be very powerful and very strongly centralised. The State will administer and direct the cultivation of the land by

means of its salaried officers commanding armies of rural toilers, organised and disciplined for this cultivation. At the same time, on the ruin of all the existing banks it will establish a single bank, financing all labour and all national commerce.

One can understand that, at first sight, such a simple plan of organisation--at least in appearance--could seduce the imagination of workers more eager for justice and equality than for liberty and foolishly fancying that these two can exist without liberty--as if to gain and consolidate justice and equality, one could rely on other people, and on ruling groups above all, however much they may claim to be elected and controlled by the people. In reality it would be for the proletariat a barrack regime, where the standardised mass of men and women workers would wake, sleep, work and live to the beat of the drum; for the clever and the learned a privilege of governing; and for the mercenary minded, attracted by the immensity, of the international speculations of the national banks, a vast field of lucrative jobbery.

At home it will be slavery, in foreign affairs a truceless war; unless all the peoples of the "inferior" races, Latin or Slav, the one tired of the bourgeois civilisation, the other almost ignorant of it and despising it by instinct, unless these peoples resign themselves to submit to the yoke of an essentially bourgeois nation and a State all the more despotic because it will call itself the People's State.

The social revolution, as the Latin and Slav toilers picture it to themselves, desire it and hope for it, is infinitely broader than that promised them by the German or Marxian programme. It is not for them a question of the emancipation parsimoniously measured out and only realisable at a very distant date, of the working class, but the complete and real emancipation of all the proletariat, not only of some countries but of all nations, civilised and uncivilised--a new civilisation, genuinely of the people, being destined to commence by this act of universal emancipation.

And the first word of this emancipation can be none other than "Liberty", not that political, bourgeois liberty, so much approved and recommended as a preliminary object of conquest by Marx and his adherents, but the *great human liberty*, which, destroying all the dogmatic, metaphysical, political and juridical fetters by which everybody to-day is loaded down, will give to everybody, collectivities as well as individuals, full autonomy in their activities and their development, delivered once and for all from all inspectors, directors and guardians.

The second word of this emancipation is *solidarity*, not the Marxian solidarity from above downwards by some government or other, either by ruse or by force, on the masses of the people; not that solidarity of all which is the negation of the liberty of each, and which by that very fact becomes a falsehood, a fiction, having slavery as the reality behind it; but that solidarity which is on the contrary the confirmation and the realisation of every liberty, having its origin not in any political law whatsoever, but in the inherent collective nature of man, in virtue of which no man is free if all the men who surround him and who exercise the least influence, direct or indirect, on his life are not so equally. This truth is to be found magnificently expressed in the Declaration of the Rights of Man drafted by Robespierre, and which proclaims that *the slavery of the least of men is the slavery of all*.

The solidarity which we ask, far from being the result of any artificial or authoritarian organisation whatsoever, can only be the spontaneous product of social life, economic as well as moral; the result of the free federation of common interests, aspirations and tendencies. It has for essential bases, *equality, collective labour*--becoming obligatory for each not by the force of law, but by the force of facts--and collective property; as a directing light, experience--that is to say the practice of the collective life; *knowledge and learning*; and as a final goal the establishment of Humanity, and consequently the ruin of all States.

There is the ideal, not divine, not metaphysical but human and *practical*, which alone corresponds to the modern aspirations of the Latin and Slav peoples. They want complete liberty, complete solidarity, complete equality in a word, they want only Humanity and they will not be satisfied, even on the score of its being provisional and transitory, with anything less than that. The Marxians will denounce their aspirations as folly; that has been done over a long period, that has not turned them from their goal, and they will never change the magnificence of that goal for the completely bourgeois platitudes of Marxian Socialism.

Their ideal is practical in this sense, that its realisation will be much less difficult than that of the Marxian idea, which, besides the poverty of its objective, presents also the grave inconvenience of being absolutely impracticable. It will not be the first time that clever men, rational and advocates of things practical and possible, will be recognised for Utopians, and that those who are called Utopians to-day will be recognised as practical men to-morrow. The absurdity of the Marxian system consists precisely in the hope that by inordinately narrowing down the Socialist programme so as to make it acceptable to the bourgeois Radicals,^[17] it will transform the latter into unwitting and involuntary servants of the social revolution. There is a great error there; all the experience of history demonstrates to us that an alliance concluded between two different parties always turns to the advantage of the more reactionary of the two parties; this alliance necessarily enfeebles the more progressive party, by diminishing and distorting its programme, by destroying its moral strength, its confidence in itself, whilst a reactionary party, when it is guilty of falsehood is always and more than ever true to itself.

As for me, I do not hesitate to say that all the Marxist flirtations with the Radicalism, whether reformist or revolutionary, of the bourgeois, can have no other result than the demoralisation and disorganisation of the rising power of the proletariat, and consequently a new consolidation of the established power of the bourgeois.

Chapter VI

Political Action and the Workers

In Germany, Socialism is already beginning to be a formidable power,^[18] despite restrictive and oppressive laws. The workers' parties^[19] are frankly Socialist--in the sense that they want a Socialistic reform of the relations between capital and labour, and that they consider that to obtain this reform, the State must first of all be reformed, and that if it will not suffer itself to be reformed peaceably, it must be reformed by political revolution. This political revolution, they maintain, must precede the social revolution, but I consider this a fatal error, as such a revolution would necessarily be a bourgeois revolution and would produce only a bourgeois socialism, that is to say it would lead to a new exploitation, more cunning and hypocritical, but not less oppressive than the present.

This idea of a political revolution preceding a social revolution has opened wide the doors of the Social Democratic Party to all the Radical democrats; who are very little Socialists. And the leaders of the Party have, against the instincts of the workers themselves, brought into close association with the bourgeois democrats of the People's Party [the Liberals], which is quite hostile to Socialism, as its Press and politicians demonstrate. The leaders of this People's party, however, have observed that these anti-Socialist utterances displeased the workers, and they modified the tone for they need the workers' assistance in their

political aims, just as it has always been the all-powerful arm of the people and then filch the profits for themselves. Thus these Popular democrats have now become "Socialists" of a sort. But the "Socialism" does not go beyond the harmless dreams of bourgeois co-operativism.

At a Congress in Eisenach, in August, 1869, there were negotiations between the representatives of the two parties, worker and democrat, and these resulted in a programme which definitely constituted the Social Democratic Labour Party. This programme is a compromise between the Socialist and revolutionary programme of the International as determined by the Congresses of Brussels and Basel, and the programme of bourgeois democracy. This new programme called for a "free People's State", wherein all class domination and all exploitation would be abolished. Political liberty was declared to be the most urgently needed condition for the economic emancipation of the working classes. Consequently the social question was inseparable from the political question. Its solution was possible only in a democratic State. The Party was declared to be associated with the International. Some immediate objectives were set out: manhood suffrage, referenda, free and compulsory education, separation of Church and State, liberty of the Press, State aid to workers' co-operatives.

This programme expresses not the Socialist and revolutionary aspirations of the workers, but the policy of the leaders. There is a direct contradiction between the programme of the International, and the purely national programme set out above, between the socialist solidarity of Labour and the political patriotism of the National State. Thus the Social Democrats find themselves in the position of being united with their bourgeois compatriots against the workers of a foreign country; and their patriotism has vanquished them Socialism. Slaves themselves of the German Government, they fulminate against the French Government as tyrants. The only difference between Bismarck and Napoleon III was that the one was a successful and the other an unsuccessful scoundrel, one was a scoundrel, and the other a scoundrel and a half.

The German Socialists' idea of a Free State is a contradiction in terms, an unrealisable dream. Socialism implying the destruction of the State, those who support the State must renounce Socialism; must sacrifice the economic emancipation of the masses to the political power of some privileged party--and in this case it will be bourgeois democracy.

The programme of the Social Democrats really implies that they rust the bourgeois democrats to help the workers to achieve a Social revolution, after the workers have helped the bourgeois to achieve a political revolution. The way they have swallowed bourgeois ideas is shown by the list of immediate objectives, which except for the last, comprise the well-known programme of bourgeois democracy. And in fact these immediate objectives have become their real objectives, so that they have lent the Social Democratic Party to become a mere tool in the hands of the bourgeois democrats.

Does Marx himself sincerely want the antagonism of class against class, that antagonism which renders absolutely impossible any participation of the masses in the political action of the State? For this action, considered apart from the bourgeoisie, is not practicable: it is only possible when it develops in conjunction with some party of that class and lets itself be directed by the bourgeois. Marx cannot be ignorant of that, and besides, what is going on to-day in Geneva, Zurich, Basel, and all over Germany, ought to open his eyes on this point, if he had closed them, which, frankly, I do not believe. It is impossible for me to believe it alter having read the speech he delivered recently at Amsterdam, in which he said that in certain countries, perhaps in Holland itself, the social question could be resolved peacefully, legally, without force, in a friendly fashion, which can mean nothing but this: it can be resolved by a series of success sive, pacific, voluntary and judicious compromises, between bourgeoisie and proletariat. Mazzini never said anything different from that.[20]

Mazzini and Marx are agreed on this point of capital importance, that the great social reforms which are to emancipate the proletariat cannot be realised except in a great democratic, Republican, very powerful and strongly centralised State, which for the proper well-being of the people, in order to be able to give them education and social welfare, must impose on them, by means of their own vote, a very strong government.[21]

I maintain that if ever the Marxian party, that of so-called Social Democracy, continues to pursue the course of political demands, it will see itself forced to condemn, sooner or later, that of economic demands, he course of strike action, so incompatible are these two courses in reality.

It is always the same German temperament and the same logic which leads the Marxists directly and fatally into what we call Bourgeois Socialism and to the conclusion of a new political pact between the bourgeois who are Radicals, or who are forced to become such and the "intelligent", respectable, that is to say, duly bourgeoisified minority of the town proletariat to the detriment of the mass of the proletariat, not only in the country, but in the towns also.

Such is the true meaning of workers' candidatures to the Parliaments of existing States, and that of the conquest of political power by the working class. For even from the point of view of only the town proletariat to whose exclusive profit it is desired to take possession of political power, is it not clear that the popular nature of this power will never be anything else than fiction? It will be obviously impossible for some hundreds of thousands or even some tens of thousands or indeed for only a few thousand men to effectively exercise this power. They will necessarily exercise it by proxy, that is to say, entrust it to a group of men elected by themselves to represent and govern them, which will cause them without fail to fall back again into all the falsehoods and servitudes of the representative or bourgeois regime. After a brief moment of liberty or revolutionary orgy, citizens of a new State, they will awake to find themselves slaves, playthings and victims of new power-lusters. One can understand how and why clever politicians should attach themselves with great passion to a programme which opens such a wide horizon to their ambition; but that serious workers, who bear in the hearts like a living flame the sentiment of solidarity with their companions in slavery and wretchedness the whole world over, and who desire to emancipate themselves not to the detriment of all but by the emancipation of all, to be free themselves with all and not to become tyrants in their turn; that sincere toilers could become enamoured of such a programme, that is much more difficult to understand.

But then, I have a firm confidence that in a few years the German workers themselves, recognising the fatal consequences of a theory which can only favour the ambition of their bourgeois chiefs or indeed that of some exceptional workers who seek to climb on the shoulders of their comrades in order to become dominating and exploiting bourgeois in their turn--I have confidence that the German workers will reject this theory with contempt and wrath, and that they will embrace the true programme of working-class emancipation, that of the destruction of States, with as much passion as do to-day the workers of the great Mediterranean countries, France, Spain, Italy, as well as the Dutch and Belgian workers.

Meanwhile we recognise the perfect right of the German workers to go the way that seems to them best, provided that they allow us the same liberty. We recognise even that it is very possible that by all their history, their particular nature, the state of their civilisation and their whole situation to-day, they are forced to go this way. Let then the German, American and English toilers try to win political power since they desire to do so. But let them allow the toilers of other countries to march with the same energy to

the destruction of all political power. Liberty for all, and a natural respect for that liberty; such are the essential conditions of international solidarity.

The German Social Democratic Labour Party founded in 1869 by Liebknecht and Bebel, under the auspices of Marx, announced in its programme that *the conquest of political power was the preliminary condition of the economic emancipation of the proletariat*, and that consequently the immediate object of the party must be the organisation of a widespread legal agitation for the winning of universal suffrage and of all other political rights; its final aim, the establishment of the great pan-German and so-called People's State.

Between this tendency and that of the Alliance [Bakunin's organisation] which rejected all political action, not having as immediate and direct objective the triumph of the workers over Capitalism, and as a consequence, the abolition of the State, there exists the same difference, the same abyss, as between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. The Alliance, taking the programme of the International seriously, had rejected contemptuously all compromise with bourgeois politics, in however Radical and Socialist a guise it might do itself up, advising the proletariat as the only way of real emancipation, as the only policy truly salutary for them, the exclusively *negative* policy of the demolition of political institutions, of political power, of government in general, of the State, and as a necessary consequence the international organisation of the scattered forces of the proletariat into revolutionary power directed against all the established powers of the bourgeoisie.

The Social Democrats of Germany, quite on the contrary, advised the workers so unfortunate as to listen to them, to adopt, as the immediate objective of their association, legal agitation for the preliminary conquest of political rights; they thus subordinate the movement for economic emancipation to the movement first of all exclusively political, and by this obvious reversal of the whole programme of the International, they have filled in at a single stroke the abyss they had opened between proletariat and bourgeoisie. They have done more than that, they have tied the proletariat in tow with the bourgeoisie. For it is evident that all this political movement so boosted by the German Socialists, since it must precede the economic revolution, can only be directed by the bourgeois, or what will be still worse, *by workers transformed into bourgeois by their ambition and vanity*, and, passing in reality over the head of the proletariat, like all its predecessors, this movement will not fail once more to condemn the proletariat to be nothing but a blind instrument inevitably sacrificed in the struggle of the different bourgeois parties between themselves for the conquest of political power, that is to say, for the power and right to dominate the masses and exploit them. To whomsoever doubts it, we should only have to show what is happenings in Germany, where the organs of Social Democracy sing hymns of joy on seeing a Congress (at Eisenach) of professors of bourgeois political economy recommending the proletariat of Germany to the high and paternal protection of States and in the parts of Switzerland where the Marxian programme prevails, at Geneva, Zurich, Basel, where the International has descended to the point of being no longer anything more than a sort of electoral box for the profit of the Radical bourgeois. These incontestable facts seem to me to be more eloquent than any words.

They are real and logical in this sense that they are a natural effect of the triumph of Marxian propaganda. And it is for that reason that we fight the Marxian theories to the death, convinced that if they could triumph throughout the International, they would certainly not fail to kill at least its spirit everywhere, as they have already done in very great part in the countries just mentioned.

The instinctive passion of the masses for economic equality is so great that if they could hope to receive it from the hands of despotism, they would indubitably and without much reflection do as they have often done before, and deliver themselves to despotism. Happily, historic experience has been of some service even with the masses. To-day, they are beginning everywhere to understand that no despotism has nor can have, either the will or the power to give them economic equality. The programme of the International is very happily explicit on this question. *The emancipation of the toilers can be the work only of the toilers themselves.*

Is it not astonishing that Marx has believed it possible to graft on this nevertheless so precise declaration, which he probably drafted himself, his *scientific Socialism*? That is to say, the organisation and the government of the new society by Socialistic scientists and professors--the worst of all despotic government!

But thanks to this great beloved "riff raff" of the common people, who will oppose themselves, urged on, by an instinct invincible as well as just, to all the governmentalist fancies of this little working-class minority already properly disciplined and marshaled to become the myrmidons of a new despotism, the *scientific Socialism* of Marx will always remain as a Marxian dream. This new experience, more dismal perhaps than all past experiences, will be spared society, because the proletariat in general, and in all countries is animated to-day by a profound distrust against what is political and against all the politicians in the world, whatever their party colour, all of them having equally deceived, oppressed, exploited--the reddest Republicans just as much as the most absolutist Monarchists.

Appendix

In I. Berlin's *Karl Marx: His Life and Environment* (Home University Library) are reprinted some passages of Bakunin's writing which I have not seen elsewhere and which emphasise his views on the State, and other passages on the character of Marx. The first selection is as follows:

"We revolutionary anarchists are the enemies of all forms of State and State organisations ... we think that all State rule, all governments being by their very nature placed outside the mass of the people, must necessarily seek to subject it to customs and purposes entirely foreign to it. We therefore declare ourselves to be foes ... of all State organisations as such, and believe that the people can only be happy and free, when, organised from below by means of its own autonomous and completely free associations, without the supervision of any guardians, it will create its own life."

"We believe power corrupts those who wield it as much as those who are forced to obey it. Under its corrosive influence some become greedy and ambitious tyrants, exploiting society in their own interest, or in that of their class, while others are turned into abject slaves. Intellectuals, positivists,^[22] doctrinaires, all those who put science before life ... defend the idea of the state as being the only possible salvation of society--quite logically since from their false premises that thought comes before life, that only abstract theory can form the starting point of social practice ... they draw the inevitable conclusion that since such theoretical knowledge is at present possessed by very few, these few must be put in possession of social life, not only to inspire, but to direct all popular movements, and that no sooner is the revolution over than a new social organisation must at once be set up; not a free association of popular bodies ... working in accordance with the needs and instincts of the people, but a centralised dictatorial power, concentrated in the hands of this academic minority, as if they really expressed the popular will. ... The difference between such revolutionary dictatorship and the modern State is only one of external trappings. In substance both are a tyranny of the minority over a majority in the name of the people--in the name of the stupidity of the many and the superior

wisdom of the few; and so they are equally reactionary, devising to secure political and economic privilege to the ruling minority and the ... enslavement of the masses, to destroy the present order only to erect their own rigid dictatorship on its ruins." (pp. 205-6)

footnotes

(use the "go back" function of your browser to return to the text)

1. That is, the Marxians.
2. i.e., 1871.
3. Historical Materialism.
4. Lassalle lived 1825-64; a brilliant demagogue, he popularised (or vulgarised) Marx's teachings and launched the Social Democratic Movement in Germany. His organisation, the General Association of German Workers, united with the Marxists in 1875.
5. Bakunin's use of the term "supreme end of history" (in the sense of aim or objective), must not be taken to have a teleological signification, that is, taken to mean that he considered that the nature of things is such that there is a cosmic aim or purpose which informs the whole cosmic activity. Such a theory inevitably involves the notion of some directive intelligence behind Nature, and this, as a materialist, Bakunin absolutely denied. He means by "supreme end of history" simply the ideal at which the human race should aim, as defined by him a few lines further on in the text. As he said in another passage of his works, man is part of universal Nature and cannot fight against it; "But by studying its laws, by identifying himself in some sort with them, transforming them by a psychological process proper to his brain, into ideas and human convictions, he emancipates himself from the triple yoke imposed on him firstly by external Nature, then by his own individual inward Nature, and finally by the society of which he is the product." (Michael Bakunin and Karl Marx, p. 337.)
6. Bakunin wrote some years before Pasteur's discovery of a cure for this disease.
7. This, of course, is an exaggeration on Bakunin's part. Such vandalism was not common. It was the political convulsions, barbarian invasions, and endless wars, foreign and civil, that caused the decline of culture. The Christians tended to neglect and ignore the classical culture rather than persecute it. Of course, it is true that the decline and practical extinction of the ancient culture greatly impaired intellectual progress.
8. Babeuf (1762-97) formed conspiracy of "Equals" to seize power in France and introduce an authoritarian equalitarian Communism. Plot discovered and conspirators executed.
9. Blanc, Louis (1811-82) advocated State Socialism in France, particularly in the period 1840-50.
10. Written in September, 1870.
11. Thiers, Adolphe (1797-1877), President of the Third Republic in 1871-3. He was primarily responsible for the ruthless suppression of the Paris Commune.
12. It should be kept in mind in reading this and the paragraphs concerning the United States, that they were written in 1867 not long after the close of the Civil War. At that time it was not as easy to see as it is now, that the Republican Party was not really a "Party of Liberation" but the Party of Industrial Capitalism, and that the Civil War was fought, not to "emancipate the slaves" but merely to decide whether they should continue as chattel slaves or change their status to that of wage-slaves.
13. A satiric allusion to the reference to Marx by Sorge, the German- American delegate, at the Hague Conference.
14. Compare James Burnham's theory in his *Managerial Revolution*.
15. i.e., 1872.
16. This sentence is, of course, purely ironical.
17. Radicals--the more progressive wing of the Liberals, and standing for social reform and political equalitarianism, but not for the abolition of private property, or of the wage system. Hence they were not Socialists. The Labour Party of to-day has inherited much of their policy.
18. Written in September, 1870.
19. The Marxists and the Lassalleans. They united in 1875.
20. In a previous passage, Bakunin had said that Mazzini, like the Marxists, wanted to use the people's strength whereby to gain political power.
21. This is essentially the line put forward to-day by Labour politicians, especially when, in Australia, they are asking for increased powers for the Federal Government.

22. Followers of Auguste Comte (1798-1857) founder of the science of Sociology. In his later writings Comte advocated a Religion of Humanity, to be led by a sort of agnostic secular priesthood consisting of scientific intellectuals, who would act as the moral and spiritual guides of a new social order.